The REAL MEANING OF GENESIS

DAVID A. MURRAY

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The REAL MEANING OF GENESIS

BY

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TO THE STUDENTS OF MY CLASSES IN MONMOUTH
COLLEGE WITH PLEASANT RECOLLECTION
OF OUR DISCUSSION OF THESE PICTURES
AND PROBLEMS THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

Preface

THIS study of the book of Genesis proposes to view the book in quite a different light from that which is customary. It does not look on it as merely some stray relics of ancient history, the attempt of a mere scribe to preserve some of the nation's traditions and folklore.

It considers it to be the original work of some great prophet or religious leader. He was a man who, like the author of Hebrews, Ecclesiastes or Jeremiah, had a message which he wished to give to the people. The book has a single unified theme or argument, and all the stories are designed and intended to illustrate and prove the one point which the author is making.

That message, the central theme of the book of Genesis, is an attempt to answer the world's great problem: "What is the way to get the most satisfactory and most successful life?" His treatment of the subject is as follows:

He selects five great principles which always have been and still are the expedients most looked to for this. These five expedients might be designated by the terms Environment, Efficiency, Ecclesiasticism, Punishment and Nationalism. By means of stories and other devices he examines them one by one, and makes them all out to be failures and disappointments. This occupies the first division of Genesis, to chapter twelve.

In the latter division he takes up the positive side and depicts what he considers to be the one way that will lead to true success and happiness. That way is "Life personally conducted by God.'' This he illustrates and sets forth by a connected series of stories of men thus personally conducted, whose lives become eminently successful and noble. This is his answer to the great problem. And he ends all with one transcendent and brilliant example of such a life,—incidentally one of the most beautiful stories in all literature,—the story of Joseph.

This is doubtless somewhat of a departure from the current critical theory of its composition. But why should it seem unreasonable to contend that a book of such surpassing literary excellence was the work of an author of genius and originality? Of course we presume that he used "Sources,'' older treatment of the same incidents. So did Shakespeare, Longfellow and many other poets and annalists. But the selection of the material and the artistic treatment are his, and employed by him to body forth a great message which he wished to convey.

If the book was thus written by some great leader with a definite message and purpose, the main value will not depend on the historicity of the stories but will lie in the social and religious message which the stories are used to set forth. To trace that message shall be our main quest here.

If such a unifying message can be found in the book, one of much importance and of truly fundamental character, that will enable us to confidently reinstate the book in its old place as a religious guide. If it is the voice of a prophet appealing for some great religious principle and only using these stories as a medium to embody his appeal, the value will not be affected by any destructive conclusions of historical criticism. The moral lessons of a story are the same whether it be fact or parable.

Perhaps we may place Genesis alongside of the books of Job and Ecclesiastes as somewhat in the same category. Job was written to discuss the problem of suffering. Ecclesiastes was written to portray the unsatisfactoriness of all worldly aims. Genesis has the somewhat similar thesis that only by being personally conducted by God will one experience real success. The whole book is the effort to set forth and illustrate that one truth.

Each of these three authors discusses his thesis by a different method. The author of Ecclesiastes uses plain direct argument. The author of Job stages a dialogue between several wise men. The author of Genesis seeks to make his point by a series of stories, in which he first shows that all our most trusted expedients for success and happiness fail. Then he presents certain men as personally conducted by God who, though starting often very imperfect and stumbling at times on the road, yet in the end all closed their careers with success and glory.

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PART I

LIGHTS THAT FAILED

CHAPTER I

Introduction

I

THE Bible has always held a unique place in our religious system. It has been called "The only infallible rule of faith and practice." It has been accepted as the final court of appeal in doctrine and its distribution and use has been a chief reliance in spreading our faith.

For the most part the Old Testament has been esteemed on much the same plane as the New in all these respects. But recently a change has come over our attitude toward it. The results of historical research and various other causes have led us to dethrone the Jew and the religion he professed from the pedestal of special sanctity. No longer do we accept his "Thus saith Jehovah" as authoritative. It is getting popular to bracket the Jewish cult and the Old Testament teaching in the same category with the other ethnic religions whose errors we parade to exalt the superiority of our own beliefs.

Yet so great a Christian authority as the apostle Paul indorsed these Old Testament writings as "Profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3: 16). Jesus himself exhorted men to search them as having words of eternal life (John 5: 39), and it was to them he referred when he said "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law until all things be accomplished" (Matt. 5: 18).

It is rather revolutionary to sweep wholesale into the discard something which comes with such high credentials and which two thousand years of Christian faith have held in honor. May it not be possible that it is not the book but our interpretation that is at fault, and that we are not finding in those Scriptures the real meaning which they were intended to convey?

With that thought in mind our study here of the book of Genesis is intended expressly for the purpose of trying to find such a new meaning and a new value in it, one which will not be affected by the conclusions of historical criticism and will not be founded on the sanctity or on the beliefs of the persons portrayed.

If Genesis is only a scribe's collection of folk lore and half-mythical legends it may be interesting to the antiquary but hardly worthy a major place in our religious standards. But it may be quite different if, as we shall assume here, it is the work of some great prophet or religious leader who had an important religious principle or message which he wished to impress, and these stories were only his means of embodying it as in a picture or parable. That was the method which was popular with the Hebrew teacher rather than our use of logic and display of convincing facts. That was the method of Jesus, who spoke all things in parables, and the method much used by all the Old Testament prophets.

If that is the method the author intended to use here we need to ask merely, "What was the message he wished to convey?" and "Is it a worthy message?" We may disregard all questions of historicity and as far as the narrative material is concerned, view it, as the author used it, merely as a vehicle in which to convey a great message. Doing so I believe we will find that he had a message of supreme importance, a message defining man's proper relation to God and God's attitude toward men. That is a question that is vital and at the very foundation of our religion.

If some such meaning as this can be established as the real purpose of the book of Genesis it may be possible to retain it still somewhat in its old place as a unique religious guide.

II

Can we continue then to consider the book divinely inspired? That question is not now, perhaps, so acute as it once was, and it is not at all essential to our purpose here, which is to find out the meaning of the document which we have. But as there may be some readers to whom it will have a critical importance we may step aside a moment to candidly face it.

When we notice the enormous superiority, both in style and content, of the material here over similar material found in the religious literature of other nations of equal or far superior culture, we are forced to admit something unique and special in its character. And when we add to that the very high religious recognition which it has been able to compel from the best of men all down through the centuries, it would solve a great literary problem if we were able to believe that there was in its composition some contribution in some way from a divine source.

If the book stood alone there might be too great a presumption against any such contribution. But it stands as part of a long and consistent religious régime, at various points in which there were men, namely the prophets, who stoutly claimed to receive divine influence, and especially there was one man, Jesus Christ, who has been universally conceded by all Christians to bring in some way a revelation from a divine source. If the divine appeared in that one place some contact of the divine would not be illogical to expect in other places in that régime and so might be present in our book here.

It is not intended here to claim any such inspiration so as to make it a premise in our interpretations. We will try to interpret the things said quite irrespective of who said them. At the same time it will be quite grateful if we can interpret all things in a way that would be consistent with the inclusion of a divine factor. Wherever reference is made to "The Author" it will be proper to consider that the divine author is intended, or included.

How divine influence would contribute is another question and an open question. Certainly it need not necessarily be by dictation of historical facts or mere guarantee of historical accuracy. There are other things the divine mind may have considered far more important.

If we examine the one series of communications that are admittedly divine, namely those made by Jesus Christ, we find that he did not exclusively use historical facts to convey or enforce his lessons—he did not usually do so. On the contrary he conveyed most of his messages by made-up stories—by fiction. "Without a parable spake he not unto the people" (Mark 4: 34). This surely is a high enough precedent and leaves the field quite open. We may plausibly expect to find, even in a divinely inspired book, any kind of writing that any literary writer uses to clothe his message if it suits the purpose—if it is best adapted to produce the impression the divine mind wished to have disseminated.

III

We should not be surprised then if we have here expressions and narratives that were intended to have a different interpretation than their mere literal face meaning. This would be specially probable in Hebrew literature which is characteristically so saturated with metaphor, symbolism and allegory. The prophets and Psalms are just full of longer or shorter figurative passages and pictures. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt" (Ps. 80:8). "Moab is my washpot" (Ps. 60:8). "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb" (Isa. 11:6). "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?" (Isa. 63:1). The whole book of Revelation and parts of Daniel are apocalyptic allegory.

If one ascribes inspiration to these writings we are considering he must remember that it is just as great desecration to insist on a literal interpretation of something which the divine inspirer meant to be a symbol or allegory as it would be to err the other way. In any case an author's words should be interpreted as he intended them.

Reading the book with this understanding it might seem appropriate to treat some of the early story of Genesis as a kind of parable. The word parable, of course, is usually applied only to a short anecdote or single incident, like the parables of Jesus. But if a long, continued story is presented with the same intention, merely to embody some religious truth, it evidently has the same kind of value and must be interpreted in the same way as those parables. For that reason we may frequently use the word "parable" as applying to these stories though literary usage might hardly warrant it. It is merely to keep in mind the fact that the same treatment we apply to the parables of Jesus can legitimately be applied to these stories if their character is that which is proposed above.

If it is thought that we are losing much by not insisting on the historical character of the narratives and the validity of the occurrences, we should remember that at best records of events in such a remote antiquity would have little value for evidence now, at least unless they were guaranteed by divine inspiration. And if inspired thus their religious lessons would be just as valuable irrespective of whether they were history or merely stories. The religious message of the parable of the Talents or of the Good Samaritan, for instance, would not be at all enhanced if those stories had been history instead of fiction as they profess to be.

What we shall expect to get will not be the religious beliefs and experiences of various people in various distant past ages but the message of some one religious leader or prophet who thought he had a message to give and took this method of giving it. That is all we get from the writings of most religious leaders—from Moody or Bunyan or Augustine, from Paul or Amos or Jeremiah. We think we find great value in their messages. I believe we shall find that this author's message is as worthy of being heard as that of any of them.

For I do not see how we can doubt that this book had an author quite of the same caliber as the best of those men. A book of such exceptional literary merit, and which has held the admiration and affection of the world's best scholars for centuries is not simply an accidental scrap book. Mere careful scribes do not produce literary masterpieces. The author, editor or compiler, whichever we may deem him to be, was a genius of the very highest rank. He was one of the world's great literary masters, and he was a great philosopher besides.

This perhaps is not the popular opinion current now. But I predict that our study will show that it is true. He was really a great prophet seeking to impress upon his people a great religious truth. He has presented here an important principle of social and religious philosophy which we may well take to heart today.

But the unfolding and proof of all this we must leave to the actual study of the book to make clear.

IV

What is the book of Genesis? It is rather contrary to the usual estimate, but in these studies we are going to consider it as a treatise by itself and not merely the first chapter of a larger work, a Pentateuch or Hexateuch. It is only the acceptance of tradition that would lead us to consider it part of a larger work. A real examination of the book itself seems to me to reveal unquestionable evidence that it has no vital connection with the books that follow, any more than Isaiah has with Jeremiah or Job with the book of Psalms. Certainly it is as distinct as Judges from the book of Joshua.

In the first place the style is quite different, almost as different as, for instance, Hawthorne's from Gibbon's. The later books are history. Genesis is a series of stories with a message—a set of "Problem stories." Events are not narrated in reasonable historic proportion but painted with a wealth of incident and vivid coloring like the work of a skilful story-teller. The later books aim more just to bring together facts for information. This uses all the arts and expedients to tell an interesting story and make a vivid picture of a few events and situations.

For instance, there is about as much space taken up with the incidents of the return of Jacob from Padanaram (Gen. 31-33) as with all the history of the deliverance from Egypt; more for the romance of the wedding of

Isaac (Gen. 24) than for the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai (Exod. 19, 20), as much for the personal story of Joseph as for all the history of the conquering of Canaan by Joshua. This is the style that obtains all through the book of Genesis.

In its physical form Genesis presents features not found in any of the other books. It is divided up by the recurring words or titles "These are the generations," into eleven sections and a prologue. This division into sections is a feature that has no counterpart in any of the following books.

Most important of all is the fact that Genesis is clearly a completed book. It is a book with a subject that is treated and finished, a program that is fully carried out and ended. This is not usually recognized but I believe we shall see it very definitely as we progress with our studies. The author has a definite philosophical thesis which he is presenting—a definite sociological message. This he develops in a systematic manner. He demonstrates it by a large number of convincing examples, completely makes out his points and ends all with an exquisite story to illustrate and clinch all the argument.

This is not merely an incident but the whole structure of the book. The whole book is a closely knit argument and a message. This however must be left to the studies themselves to unfold, for it shall be the whole task of our studies to point out and follow this thesis and argument which the author is presenting.

V

There is one other minor feature which may or may not have significance, but at least is rather interesting. It is in connection with the author's treatment of his women characters. It is a feature found nowhere else in the Bible, seldom in any literature.

In every case he introduces them in a bad light. Not one does a noble or heroic act, and he has something bad or disparaging about every one of them—not some of them or most of them but every one without exception where any specific acts at all are recorded of them.

When we turn to the other Old Testament books we find just the opposite to be true. Nearly every time women are spoken of there it is for something worthy or noble. Moses' mother, his sister Miriam, the midwives, Pharaoh's daughter, women making hangings for the tabernacle, Rahab the inn keeper, Deborah, Jael, Naomi, Ruth, and so the list goes on.

About the only women in all the rest of the Old Testament to whom evil deeds are attributed are women from outside, heathen nations such as Jezebel, Athaliah, Delilah and the like. Nearly all the other women there do good things, but here none of them do good, and every one does something bad.

Go through the list. First Eve was the author of all evil by eating the forbidden fruit. In Gen. 6:1, 2, it was "The daughters of men" taken in marriage by the sons of God, which the author makes a leading cause of the corruption which brought on the flood.

Perhaps most people would think that Sarah was an exception to this. We instinctively honor her as the wife of Abraham, but what single noble or meritorious act is recorded of her? She twice allowed herself to be decoyed from her husband to another man (chap. 12:11-15 and 20:2). It is true Abraham suggested it, but that does not clear her. She could have her own way when she wanted to, as we see in the case of Hagar and Ishmael (chap.

16:5, 6 and 21:10, 11). She laughs at the message of the angel and then lies about it (chap. 18:5). She persuaded Abraham to take her slave Hagar as a concubine with the idea that she would get the glory if there were children (chap. 16:1, 2), and when she found that she would not get that she so abused that slave that she ran away (chap. 16:6). And later, after her own son Isaac was born she was so jealous of Ishmael that she forced Abraham, much against his will to cast out his son and the mother (chap. 21:10, 11).

Hagar, perhaps, was rather a decent sort of a woman, but it was enough disparagement in the author's estimation that she was a slave. The same would be true of Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob's concubines.

Lot's wife looked back and was turned to a pillar of salt, (chap. 19:26). His two daughters were guilty of incest, (chap. 19:31-36). Rebekah made Jacob work the base deception on his father (chap. 27:5-17). Rachel stole the images from her father (chap. 31:19), and lied about them (chap. 31:34, 35). Leah was blear-eyed and homely, which the author considered enough bad to say about her (chap. 29:17). Dinah, Jacob's daughter, was unchaste (chap. 34:1, 2). Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, was guilty of incest (chap. 38:14-19). And finally, it was the wife of Potiphar that tempted Joseph, and failing lied about him and got him thrown into prison (chap. 39:7-19).

This completes the list of his women, and it also completes the list of their acts, for there are practically no other acts assigned to them besides these disparaging ones. Yes, there was, just one. Rebekah drew water for the old servant's camels, which is to her credit (chap.

24:18-20). But it is the only creditable act of any kind ascribed by the author to any woman in the book.

Was the author a man who had been unhappy in his marital relations, like Socrates, Carlyle, Wesley and other famous men? At any rate we do not find this feature in any of the other Bible books. It seems to be a specialty of this one book, and might seem to be a corroboration of the hypothesis that Genesis was written by a different author than the other books of the Pentateuch.

VI

For these and other reasons we are assuming a separate authorship for our book of Genesis. At least it is a separate, independent book and it is as such that we shall consider it in our study, a book that someone wrote because he believed he had a message, and wrote the book to body forth that message.

This is not, it is true, a vital question, yet it does have some importance. It would make considerable difference in the meaning we could get out of these stories, whether we considered them just stray waifs of traditional folklore put in to grace the introduction of a long history, or believed them to be a complete treatise, a unified and carefully planned argument, written with the object of conveying some definite religious message.

If it be such a definitely planned treatise we should expect to find some intention in every part, and so could reasonably attribute meaning to many things which if it were not so we might consider merely casual incidents. Folk-lore may ascribe foibles to its heroes just for dramatic interest, but with a didactic writer whatever character the acts ascribed to any person seem to imply must be considered intended. Such things as the crooked acts of

Jacob, the drunkenness of Noah, the hospitality of Lot or Abraham's episode in Egypt must be given full value as intending to attribute to those men just what is there implied. A competent didactic author would not have made or have selected any given story unless he wished to give whatever impression that story evidently did give.

It is with this conception as to its purpose and character that we shall study this book of Genesis. True this does not follow exactly either the traditional or the current critical conception of the book. But without demanding beforehand assent to that conception we may be allowed to carry through what would be a plausible interpretation on that basis. It will be only fair to let the book tell its story once in that way.

If interpreted in that way the whole does unite to enforce some definite, clear-cut and important message, that message being illustrated and advocated by each several story and by every part, that would be pretty strong evidence that this is the correct conception of the character of this book of Genesis.

VII

By whom was the book written? We are confined entirely to guesswork here. Some passages, as for instance chap. 36:31, "The kings that reigned in Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel," seem to indicate that it was written a long while after the events recorded occurred, and sometime after the time when "there reigned kings over the children of Israel."

The author may have been some one of the great characters we know, or he may have been someone whose name even we have never heard. The traditional opinion is that Moses wrote it. This would suit the case excellently provided it be possible to put the date so far back.

Samuel might have written it. He was a writer of books (cf. I Chron. 29:29). He lived at a time when "Kings in Israel" were a new departure which people might appreciate as an era date. Several things in the book might be construed as indications that it was the work of a man of the tribe of Ephraim, Samuel's tribe (see pp. 295 and 323, also the prominence that the author gives to the story of Joseph, Ephraim's father). The fact that he grew up without a mother's companionship (I Sam. 1:24-29) and the knowledge of the unhappy relations that existed between the women in his father's house (I Sam. 1:6), might have given him the peculiar twist of mind to account for his treatment of the women characters. Again, the importance of being always led by God is the chief theme, as we shall see, of the book of Genesis. That was just the thing for which Samuel had intense zeal. This is seen in his strong dissent when the people asked for a human king (I Sam. 8:6ff.), and also in his drastic treatment of King Saul when in a single particular he failed to follow perfectly the leading of God in the expedition against the Amelekites (I Sam. 15:26 etc.).

Nathan and Gad are credited with writing books (I Chron. 29:29), and might have written this. Doubtless there were many others in the prophetic line that did so. When we come to such great characters as Isaiah and Jeremiah we see men who made substantial additions to the religious conceptions of the race, and the author of this book, I believe must be classed with them in that respect.

But the question is not specially important. The book carries its own credentials of worth in what it is, and does not need to appeal to the prestige of a noted name. And on the other hand, if we accept the presence of a divine element, that would be final, and the personality of the author, though interesting from a literary and historical point of view, from a religious standpoint would be quite secondary.

CHAPTER II

The Creator

I

THE opening chapter of the book of Genesis is usually called The Story of Creation. It has always been considered a majestic masterpiece. There are many other attempts in literature to picture the origin of the world but none that compare with this.

In our Christian thinking this Creation story has always had a very important place. And in recent years it has been the center of very bitter controversy. Is this controversy, as so often happens, perhaps based on misunderstanding? Is this properly to be rated as a descriptive account of the creation?

The passage does, of course, give a story of creation, but is that its chief purpose? Is it put in the book just in order to give information as to how all things were made? That matter is interesting, but it is not anything belonging to religion.

The author could know what the process really was only if it were specially revealed to him by God. Why should God take pains to reveal a great series of scientific facts in a book about religion? Especially when he had been at pains to reveal it so wonderfully in another book, the great book of nature, why should he here by supernatural revelation anticipate and give the answers to the beautiful problems he designed for us to work out from the other book?

But really there is here no attempt at new revelation.

What is there here that any intelligent man, ancient or modern, provided he had the literary talent and his ideas of God were high enough, might not have conceived and written as a picture of Creation. There is here no detailing of process or means, simply the statement that known things were made by God. The opening verses speak of a vast watery chaos which God brought into order, but that is a conception very common in ancient cosmogonies. All the remainder is just cataloguing the things we see in the earth and sky and declaring that God made them. God made the sky and the water above it, the sea and the land, grass and trees, sun, moon and stars, fishes, birds, animals, and finally man in God's own image.

This is the whole story. From a literary point of view it is a unique and wonderful picture, but from a scientific point of view that is practically all there is there, just a typical list of the main elements of the world as the men of his generation conceived them, and the sovereign, eternal God placed above it all as creator and sustainer.

The real topic of this passage is not Creation but *The Creator*. It is not intended for a history of the process of creation but to give a vivid impression of God as the creator. There is no supernatural revelation, nothing at all to indicate how anything was made. It tells not *how* but *who*. Its whole purpose is to exalt God by declaring him the creator of all things. That is what the author really wished to effect by it.

He wanted to give in advance, unmistakably, an assertion of the infinite greatness of God. That was the real purpose of this opening passage. It is a sort of prologue to the book of Genesis. The body of the book is going to deal with God's friendly treatment of men, his sympathetic attitudes toward them and the extremely intimate, cordial and familiar relations which the author claims that God wishes men to have with him. That, by the way, is precisely the message of the New Testament and the great truth that Jesus Christ came to teach and to exemplify. But there was danger in teaching such a truth in that age, that men would get, or would be confirmed in, the conception of a small god, an "anthropomorphic" god, a "tutelar divinity" devoting himself exclusively to their one tribe or family. It is the charge of critics now that such is the teaching of the book.

It is to guard against this that the author takes pains here at the outset, in this prologue, to declare and emphasize the infinite greatness of God, to picture it forth in terms and in a way that could not be mistaken or misconstrued. That is the real value that he intended in this passage. That is why he begins his treatise with this account. Its purpose is for a picture of the Creator rather than for a history of creation. It is the highest conception he could give of the greatness of God. Even to the present time we have been able to form no greater conception of God than as the creator of all things.

To be sure, this was an appropriate and natural way for the author to begin his story in any case, but at the same time it does have this very important value that it sets forth clearly and definitely what was his real estimate of the God whom he afterward sets forth as engaging in such familiar and sympathetic relations with men, so that seems the most reasonable and adequate purpose to assign to it.

Having thus once unequivocally set forth the fact that God is an infinite, all powerful and all controlling being, he could afterward picture small, personal, sympathetic acts of God without fear of misunderstanding. With the idea of God's infinite greatness once firmly in mind these things would be seen as acts of condescension and would have the more impressive value, just as we now so appreciate them. Having once emphatically declared the infinite greatness of God, anything else said about him must be interpreted from that standpoint.

From the scientific quarter objection is sometimes made to the order or succession of events given here. But there is no reason to suppose the author claimed to follow the real chronological order in which things occurred. He would have no means of knowing that order, and there would be no value in giving it. Much more plausible to suppose his order not chronological but logical, merely giving the great facts in the form and order to make the most vivid impression.

His purpose is to make the most effective picture of God as the Creator. He sees the world as it is and conceives what things must be done to bring it to this condition, and so he makes a picture of God doing those things. That is what he wants to impress. It is not so much a history as a picture. It is really a group of pictures, as he divides the things to be done into several groups to make a more vivid impression. Being a Hebrew he naturally takes seven as the number of his pictures, and the most convenient framing is to cast it as the work of seven days. The term "day" is certainly used in some metaphorical sense and so need not necessarily imply definite periods of time.

II

It will be convenient to analyze the passage as seven paragraphs preceded by an introduction. The seven days we may count as beginning with verse three. What goes before is preparatory or introduction. It gives the basis from which the seven days' work begins.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God [1]moved upon the face of the waters.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is the first great fact. God was the producer of all that exists. "In the beginning." Evidently there was no beginning to God. He was before there was anything else. All that is, is because God made it. Men and nature can change things from one shape to another, but the beginning of all things was God making them.

"Created" is the strongest word he could use. Whether or not we can draw a sharp distinction between this word and the word that later is translated "made," to the Hebrew ears, just as to our ears, it carried the meaning of causing something to exist that did not exist before. The phrase "heavens and earth" was just the common conventional term used when they wished to include everything without any exception.

This, then, is our first introduction to God. We are to think of him as existing indefinitely far back, long before anything else existed, and we are to think of him as having made everything that exists in the first place.

To understand the author in this creation story we must realize what he had in mind to describe. We with our astronomy, our geology, and the great problems of physics, chemistry and the origin of life, have an entirely different problem in mind when we discuss the subject of creation. He knew or cared for none of these things. To him the world as he saw it, the world of men and animals, of fields, mountains, trees, rivers, all beautiful and wonderful, was an accepted fact. His only question was, Who made it all?

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[1] Or, *was brooding upon.*

There were naturally two facts to consider. In all human making there are the two factors, first the material and second the process of shaping and fashioning it. He has the same thought here, however the material used is also made by God. In this introductory paragraph he presents God as making or creating the material he is going later to use. The remainder of the account shows him working upon it and forming it into all the forms and factors that constitute the world we now know.

This first operation is what we would call more properly real creation—bringing into existence the material that was to be used. That is all that is intended. No organized part or section of the world we know figures here, but only the material with which it was later to be made.

"The earth was without form and void
And darkness upon the face of the waters."

Everything was created, as far as bringing it into existence was concerned, but the process of forming it into the world we know had not yet begun. That which was created was the "raw material" which was to be used.

The next phrase is one of special significance, and intended to be the key to all that follows.

"The Spirit of God moved (or brooded)
over the face of the waters."

The figure seems to be that of the hen brooding over her nest to bring about life in that which is there. Whatever be the specific translation of the word used—"moved" or "brooded"—at least the intention is that the Spirit or presence of God was there to act upon and produce results in that vast formless existence. Whatever results or changes we shall later see are therefore to be the work of that brooding God.

III

So much then is the prologue of the prologue—the introduction to the great work that he is going to depict in the seven pictures of the seven days.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

What will be the first act—the work of the first day? We would expect it to be something most fundamental and general. He expresses it in the words:

"God said, Let there be light
And there was light."

Hebrew speech is always quite saturated with metaphor and symbolism. We see it constantly everywhere. Jesus says, "Eat my flesh," "Destroy this temple," "Out of him shall flow rivers of water." Just so here, while the Hebrew would read "light" he would instinctively think of a deeper meaning. Light always stands as the symbol of something good, of order, of that which has meaning. With the Spirit of God brooding over all, when God is ready and so directs, light—order, meaning, purposeful movements—begin to appear.

In our more schematic language of science we call it "The Reign of Natural Law." We count it one of the great discoveries of our modern science. We are not to think that this Hebrew prophet or philosopher away back there had already discovered this wonderful generalization of science. But he did have a dim adumbration of a something fundamental in the orderliness of all things, and we with our greater wealth of discoveries and progress of thought have been able to systematize it into that great concept which we call Natural Law. This was the creative work of the first day.

"God divided the light from the darkness."

For physical light there is no line of division between light and darkness, where it ceases to be light and is dark instead. There is only lighter and darker. Our darkest has still some light, and the brightest thing we can make —the electric arc—seen against the disc of the sun looks like a dark spot. So in a physical sense we could not "divide the light from the darkness." But as a figure of speech the meaning is plain. More and more the good and the orderly and the meaningful were being built out of disorder and chaos. The brooding Spirit was thus beginning to produce results.

"God saw the light, that it was good."

It is what God likes—physical, mental and moral light. That is what he calls "day" and the opposite he calls "night."

"And there was evening and there was morning
Day one."

What is the scheme by which the author divides his account into days? We have implied that it is logical rather than chronological. Doubtless to some extent it does follow the actual order in which the cosmos developed, but that is not important.

To understand the author's order we must understand what it is he is trying to describe. When we in our time think of the universe that God made we think of the millions of suns and systems, our solar system but one small, inconspicuous unit, and our world but a mere speck. When we think of the formation of this world, we think of the cooling of a great fiery mass, the upheaval of the mountains, the laying down through long æons of the strata of the rocks, and all the other things that geology tells about. This author knew nothing of all that.

This world, to him, was the home of man. That was the only way he thought about it. That was what it was made for. Indeed till very lately that was the universal conception. Man was the chief fact of the universe. Thus in the poet Pope's satire:

> "Behold, says man, all things created for my use.
> See man for mine, exclaims the pampered goose."

It was specifically as preparing a home for man that the author thought of creation. This determines his program and the laying out of his order of days. At the end he gives an account of the creating of man, installing him as lord of all. What goes before is the preparation for him, the work of preparing a suitable place of abode.

IV

He divides the preparation into four parts, assigning four days to it. He puts the animals in with man as part of the inhabitants that are to use and enjoy the prepared world, and assigns two days to them, making the six days.

He has four days for the preparation because he recognizes in it four stages, or four kinds of preparation. Of these the first two might be called cosmic, and the last two are more specific and intimate.

The first of these acts of cosmic preparation was the one that we have already considered on the first day. It was the creation of Light, of Natural Law, establishing order, organization, meaning and usefulness in the vast created mass. This is the appropriate opening act, the most fundamental of all.

6 And God said, Let there be a [2]firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

The second act of preparation, also cosmic, was setting off from the great total mass the specific part that was to be used as the home of man and scene of all further preparation.

> "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters
> And let it divide the waters from the waters."

He opened up a great expanse—"Raqia"—or open space to set off that which was to become our world from the rest of the cosmos.

We need not stress a literal interpretation for the word "waters." It was a convenient word to use for the vast expanse of matter in its primitive form. He had to use some word. We use words often in the same loose way.

It agreed with the common conception of the world at that time. In the belief of the ancients the inhabited earth was but an island floating in a vast ocean. Over it was a solid crystal dome or "firmament" holding up a limitless body of water above, which sometimes leaked through forming rain. No one of his age had any conception of the earth as a ball floating free in space. He spoke as a man of his age adapting his descriptions to the ideas his hearers held. He does not say that those conceptions are correct. Indeed his word which we translate "firmament," having perpetuated in our usage that strange idea of the ancients, does not mean a firm crystal dome, but merely a space or expanse. It is we that make a blunder if any is made, not he.

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[2] Heb. *expanse.*

This completes the cosmic preparation. It sets off the earth ready to prepare and fit up for the home of man. And this constitutes the second picture, or the second day.

> "And there was evening and there was morning
> A second day."

We ought to notice the way in which he designates his days. It is "Evening and Morning," not morning and evening as would seem more natural to us. This is hardly from the custom of counting days from sunset to sunset, instead of from midnight to midnight, as we do. It fits that hardly any better than it fits our way. It is more plausible to suppose he meant what the words convey. His day was a development from evening to morning, from darkness to light.

He uses this same expression again and again, for each succeeding day. The morning of one day is apparently always the evening of the next day, each getting successively brighter. There was a progress steadily upward. We call it Evolution, and spin theories about it. Had he caught some germ of the same idea? We know that philosophers in Greece, possibly not so far from the same time, had already conceived of something similar. Had he also caught this feature of God's method of working? It fits in perfectly with all he says, both here of creation, and later of the progress of the race.

V

The next two days cover the specific preparation for the residence of man.

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. 11 And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, *and* fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also. 17 And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

The work of the first of these days seems to be divided into two parts. First the waters drain off into the seas, leaving the land dry and free. Then the earth puts forth grass, herbs, trees and all kinds of vegetation. Perhaps we may think he should have assigned two days for these great major operations, and then he could have used up his six days without the necessity of dividing the animal creation into two somewhat arbitrary divisions to occupy two days at the end.

But he is logically correct in putting both of these in one day. Every farmer has seen a similar thing occur many times in his fields. A pond of water drains or sinks away, and the place where it had been immediately springs up in rich green grass. And so it is natural that with a single stroke he dries off the earth and covers it with vegetation all ready for the use of the inhabitants. To make two days of this would really have seemed redundant.

A difficulty emerges. The question is naturally asked, why does he separate the creation of vegetable life by a whole intervening day from the first beginning of animal life? As a matter of fact biologists today say there is no clearly marked line of division between them. The lowest forms of animal life and of vegetable life are so similar—even crossing each other in some features—that it is sometimes almost impossible to definitely decide whether a given organism is animal or vegetable. Geology also does not indicate any long interval between the first appearance of the two forms.

But he is here still quite logical from his point of view. As we have said, he does not aim to be chronological but merely logical. He looks upon vegetation merely and solely as food and material for men and animals to use. It is merely one element of the preparation. And because there is another element of preparation to provide, and it is higher, or at least must come in later, he brings that in on a subsequent day before he brings in the inhabitants that are to use it.

Now comes the work of the fourth day. It is to bring in another kind of preparation. With vegetation he intended to be included all that ministers to the material support of man. He did not propose to go into minutia. But provision for physical wants is not all the provision that is necessary. "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matt. 4:4). There is a higher part of his life that must be considered and provided for, and that is what is contemplated in this next day, as we shall presently see.

The criticism is also made that the author made a slip here. He had light created on the first day but the sun not created till this fourth day. But there is no slip, only a failure on the critic's part to understand the thought of the author. No writer of ordinary intelligence would make or overlook such a blunder as this would be if it was a blunder.

We have seen that the words "Let there be light" of the first day do not necessarily refer to the creation of physical light—though still, as a matter of fact there was physical light long before the existence of the sun. The word "Light" as we saw, stands for something else. And on the other hand, what the author has in mind here as the event of the fourth day is not the creation of the sun as a heavenly body. Of the sun as a heavenly body, the great, enormous sphere that we know, he had not the slightest conception, nor did any of those for whom he wrote.

The motive of this day is something entirely different. It is not the creation of heavenly bodies, but the establishing of a great clock to regulate and govern men's lives. That is what he has in mind, a great clock, also lamp to light them. That is what he specifically says.

"Let them be for signs and for seasons
And for days and for years."

It is a great clock to register time—to systematize and apportion men's activities. That is what he calls it and the purpose that he assigns to it. As such it is a major part of the preparation for man.

Try to imagine what life would be like for us if there were only continuous, unbroken, unchanging light, and nothing at all to register time. Notice how completely the whole program of business, of society and of all our private lives is conditioned and regulated by just this clock of the heavens which he makes the feature of this fourth day. Consider how much this portioning out of time by the clock of the heavens adds to our lives, and how extremely maimed and impoverished we would be without it. If vegetation is used as the type of all that supports our physical lives this may well be used as a type of all that organizes and regulates our life considered as a program of activities.

There were two great lights, one coming on duty in the day time and the other at night. Also there were stars with functions to perform, for astronomy and its calculations was a very old cult with the Semite race. To be sure all these were "to give light on the earth," but that light was a tool or accessory to be used in human activities, and has a different meaning and value in the picture from the generic and symbolic light of the first day.

VI

Now the preparation is complete. The home is finished and furnished, and God can begin to introduce the inhabitants.

20 And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. 21 And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. 23 And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that

creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good. 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

We may note several points in the way the author treats this matter of the inhabitants. He devotes two of his six days to this matter of bringing in the animal life. This is appropriate enough since they are the objective of the whole creative work. But, on the other hand, if he is to use two days we would expect him to bring in all the lower animals on one day and devote the whole of the other day to man. This he does not do, but divides the animals into two groups as if specifically to be able to put man on the same day as one of the groups of animals.

It seems a little strange that he should be willing to put man in any such close connection with the lower animals, for even today there are many who strenuously deny any connection. He not only does ally man with the other animals, but seemingly goes out of his way to do it. He goes to the great pains of making a rather arbitrary division among the animals in order that he might be able to ally man with them.

The same cast of mind appears in chapter 2:18-20, where it is suggested that it was not unreasonable to expect that there might be found a full, congenial companionship for man among those lower animals (cf. chap. 9:5, 10, etc.).

If we were dividing the animals into two groups for this purpose many of us, I fancy, would put birds—ethereal creatures which fly up toward heaven—in the higher group, and reptiles and crawling things in the lower. He puts the fish and the birds into the first group and all the land animals and reptiles into the other one.

There is no particular importance in the way he chooses to divide. He probably conceived some similarity between floating about in the fluid water and floating about in the fluid air, both things that land animals cannot easily do. And perhaps he conceived a higher dignity and stability in animals that stand and walk upon the solid earth. Or perhaps it just seemed the most available easy and comprehensive division he could think of.

It is a rather interesting coincidence that our latest biological science makes the same classification and says that the flying creatures developed directly from those swimming in the water, and not from walking land animals.

But while the author suggests affinity between men and the other animals by thus going out of his way to have them created on the same day, yet he does not by any means lower man to the same level as those other animals. On the other hand he takes the most effective means to exalt the rank and dignity of man. He uses four separate devices to do this—to exalt man's place above the other animals.

In the first place, though in the same day, he sets off a separate paragraph to record the creation of man by himself.

In the second place he distinctly states that man is to have dominion over all the rest of the animal creation.

> "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea
> And over the birds of the heaven

And over the cattle and over all the earth
And over every creeping thing that creepeth upon
the earth."

In the third place he precedes the creation of man by a divine conference, as if it were an event of the greatest importance.

"Let us make man."

In the fourth place he declares that man was made in the image of God himself.

"God created man in his own image
In the image of God created he him."

Really the author's taste was correct from an artistic point of view. It brightens the effect of the picture to put it on a somber background. It really makes more conspicuous the exalted dignity of man to first introduce him in company with the lower animal creation.

There are one or two minor points in what we have gone over that might call for a passing notice. Over and over again occurs the expression:

"God saw that it was good."

Six times it occurs after successive acts of creation. Once or twice it is omitted, probably for no important reason, and at the close of all he includes all together under the same formula:

"God saw everything that he had made
And behold it was very good!"

We shall have occasion to refer to this later. For after God had completed it all and turned it over to the responsibility of man it very soon ceased to be "All very good." Indeed all the record is of failure after failure, until, in the sixth section (chap. 11:27 ff.). God again takes personal direction, and gradually brings about some good results once more.

There is a rather peculiar statement made in verses 29-31:

> 29 And God said, Behold I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food: 30 and to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life. *I have given* every green herb for food: and it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

This passage is usually interpreted to mean that God at first restricted men for their food to a purely vegetable diet. All beasts, birds and creeping things were also so restricted. This is taken in connection with chapter 9:3, where it is said:

"Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you," and made to mean that only after the flood was animal food allowed, and before that it was forbidden.

But that is such an extremely improbable state of affairs that we can hardly conceive any sane author making such a statement. Even if it be considered a myth or folk tale, when was there ever an era or a people by whom such a myth could have been originated? The earlier the date and the more primitive the people the greater use they made of meat for food. It is hard to conceive of a time when this state of affairs could be thought to have existed, especially a time when even animals did not kill and eat each other.

But there is really nothing to criticize here, for this passage does not say that God restricted them to vegetables for food. It does not say anything about restriction. God merely tells them that he has provided a great and generous supply for their food in the vegetation of the earth. This follows out our interpretation of verses 11 and 12, that the creation of vegetation on the third day was considered as merely a preparation for the coming of man. He does not tell them that they cannot or must not get food from any other source.

And yet, on the other hand, he might truthfully have told them so, for there was not any other possible source from which they could get food. And there is not any even today. They were then, and we are today, actually limited in our source for food to the vegetables. All our wonderful science has not even yet developed any other source or any other means of procuring food. We are entirely dependent on the products of vegetation.

After something has been produced as a vegetable it may be prepared by milling or cooking it or by changing it into the flesh of some animal, but some kind of vegetable growth has been the original source and must be the sole original source of all our food. Neither we nor the animals can directly assimilate inorganic matter, and vegetable growth alone has the power to change the minerals and natural inorganic matter into a form in which we can assimilate them into our bodies. So in reality we are entirely dependent on vegetables.

We have already noted that the author considered the creation of vegetation just a preparation for man, so here he is merely following up the same idea and God is telling them that abundant provision for their supply is made in the great world of vegetation. It is not restricting them but telling what a rich and abundant provision had been made.

As for the passage in chapter 9:3, after the flood, we shall later see that it does not pretend to be a first permission to eat animal food, but the meaning and purpose of that is something different and something entirely appropriate to the circumstances under which it was given, as will be apparent later when we examine that passage.

> "And there was evening and there was morning
> A sixth day."

This has been said of each of the six days, but this is the last time it is said. There is another day, but those words are not given to characterize it. Progress from lower to higher, from evening to morning, had characterized all the other days, but progress ceases when the object is attained, when the world is fully prepared and stocked with its animal inhabitants, and man is installed as ruler over it.

Possibly the author's thought was that after God turned the world over to man to have dominion there was no longer progress but the reverse—no more brightening from evening to morning. Or perhaps his thought was merely that this last day was a rest day, and so no progress to be looked for.

2 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.

The seventh day was a day of rest, as was the fixed rule in the Hebrew cult. But this does not imply that it was a vacant, useless day. Rather it was the most important, crowning day of all.

> "And God blessed the seventh day
> And hallowed it."

The office of the seventh day was to cast a sheen of hallowed, divine presence over all the finished work. What God made during the six days was material and physical. Something was added on the seventh day also, something as important as that on any of the other days, but it was spiritual. It was a sacred atmosphere, a hallowed sense of divine presence, that was to give meaning to all the rest.

Garden of Eden

CHAPTER III

Environment

I

WITH chapter 2, verse 4, we have a new section, beginning with the words, "These are the generations," words which occur eleven times in the book as the opening of the eleven sections. It would seem as though the wording "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth," would be more appropriate for the title of the account of creation in the first chapter. It has been suggested that these words really are intended as the title for that section but are placed at the end instead of the beginning of it because the majestic words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" make a more suitable opening sentence for the book.

That would leave this section without any introduction or title. This certainly is a separate section, as it has a new topic and a new movement entirely, and is every way quite distinct from the first chapter. And it is not necessary to make any such changes or adjustments if, as we have considered it, the first chapter is a prologue not calling for any title words, for this title is entirely appropriate here.

If we examine all the other places where these words are used we find that in several other cases they do not express the matter in the section which they head. Thus in chapter 37:2 we have, "These are the generations of Jacob," but the personal history of Jacob has been practically completed and what follows is really the history of

Joseph. In chapter 11:27 we have, "These are the generations of Terah," but the history is the history of Abraham. In chapter 6:1, "The book of the generations of Adam" heads the list of descendants of Adam down to Noah. The words seem to mark the point of departure rather than the substance of what is to follow.

The prologue is finished and we have now arrived at his discussion of his topic. How does he open his discussion? What is the first topic which he takes up? What are we to consider the subject and theme of this first section of the discussion?

We must first ask the question, what is the theme and message of the book as a whole? We have already, in the preface, indicated briefly what we conceive it to be. The specific theme which he undertakes to discuss is the question, How shall man attain the highest and most satisfactory life?

This is the great problem of all the ages, on which every philosopher and teacher of men has tried to throw some light. He faces it candidly by taking up five of the expedients which men have always looked to as most promising, and which are still so esteemed. One by one he considers them, and condemns them all as failures. Then he turns to the constructive side and brings forward one plan which is not to be a failure. This also he illustrates by a long, connected story constituting the latter half of the book.

This in brief is an analysis of the book as a whole. The first eleven chapters discuss the five plans or expedients that fail, by stories intended to illustrate how they would work out and what would be the results. The rest of the book sets forth the expedient that will not fail but will insure a life of nobility, success and happiness.

If this then is his theme in the whole book, this first section is to give us one of these expedients which he considers—one of those which ended in disappointment. The expedient which he thus first exploits may be expressed by the term which we have set at the head of this chapter—Environment. Give a man the fullest supply of all that can minister to his welfare and that will insure to him a completely satisfactory life. Give a man the best and most favorable environment and he will become successful and happy. That is the claim which he intends to discuss in this first section and which he sets forth by the story of the Garden of Eden. And he intends to say that that hope will be disappointed, that is not the way. The story is embellished in various ways, and there are other truths suggested in it, but that must be recognized as the chief underlying thought if we would get the real lesson which the author intended to convey.

II

This second chapter is very commonly called "A second story of the Creation," and attention is called to various discrepancies between it and the first story, in chapter one. It is not of any vital interest in our discussion whether or not this is a second story, or whether there are discrepancies in the order of events. There are no discrepancies in the religious lessons taught, and that is what we are interested in. And I believe we shall find that any appearance of discrepancy anywhere comes from fixing our attention on the mere succession of words rather than on the thought of the author.

However, to consider this a second and rival account of the creation is to quite mistake its meaning and intention. It is true that it does make a reference to God creating or making some things, but that does not make its purpose to be a story of creation. The Declaration of Independence begins with the statement that "All men *were created* free and equal," but that does not constitute it a third story of creation. Just so here the real subject matter to be presented is something quite different. Any references to creation are quite incidental.

The story in the first chapter chiefly concerns God and his movements. This story and all that follow chiefly concern man and his interests. Man and his destiny is to be the general subject. That is what is to engage our attention, so the first matter is to get man on the stage. That is the office of these opening paragraphs, rather than a general account of creation.

It all centers around man. There was a time at first when there was no man on the earth. But God made man, endowed him with divine powers, provided richly for all his needs, and also provided suitable companionship for him. That is the substance of all these first paragraphs.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven. 5 And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Jehovah God had not caused it to rain upon the earth: and there was not a man to till the ground; 6 but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. 7 And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. 8 And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Man is thought of in his most primary and characteristic capacity as a cultivator of the soil getting his living from the earth. It is appropriate to go back in thought to a time when there was no such man tilling the earth, for there were no plants or herbs to be cultivated, and no rain to fertilize and make them grow. The word translated "mist" some claim should be translated "a flood," surging to and fro in a desolate land. At any rate it indicates a desolate, prehabitation sort of a world.

Well, God not only made man in that world, but he made full provision for him. The provision is detailed in the 8th and 9th verses. Here we are to have the first of the five experiments, the author's first expedient for securing the highest life, of which we spoke. God is to surround man with everything that could minister to his needs and his tastes, and see if that will produce the greatest happiness, the highest life. That is the first plan to be tried.

First we must notice what kind of a being was man that he made. The author brings out here in another way the same conception that he had given in the first chapter in connection with man's creation, and a conception that is afterward referred to and underlies all the history (cf. chap. 6:3). Man is primarily an animal, material, sensual, made of the dust of the ground. This we are intended not to forget. But there is something more. God breathed into him something from his own divine nature which was to be a higher "living soul," a spiritual part in control of his life, unfortunately too often not succeeding in being successfully so.

What is the meaning of Eden? We naturally think of it as a definite geographical spot, a plot of ground specially prepared. Doubtless it was best for the ordinary mind to think of it in that way. The story, like a parable, presents it in that way. Jesus spoke all his truths in parables, because the common mind could get the influence from the truth clothed in a story or allegory that they could not have got from the truth just baldly and doctrinally stated. However we ought to study deeper into the real thought of the author. Jesus' disciples were expected to get the real, spiritual meaning of the parables (Matt. 13:11, 16, etc.).

Eden is given as the name of the country or region in which the garden was prepared. The word Eden means "delight" or "happiness." A garden always implies special care and richness. God provided richly for man. He placed him in "Eden," in a garden, and stocked it abundantly for all his needs. What is detailed in the 9th verse is not a variant of what is given in chapter 1:11, 12, the creation of vegetation on the earth. Nor is there any sense in the charge that this account differs from the former in making the creation of vegetables occur after the creation of man. Would any author be so ridiculous as to suppose that God made man in a desolate world and then "put him away in cold storage" somewhere for several years till trees could grow up for him to live from? Until we are able to write a book of somewhere near the excellence of this book we ought to credit its author with at least as much common sense as we have. It is not the creation of vegetation, but the stocking of a garden with trees that he is representing. And since he made it for man, presumably he made it and had it ready before he made the man to live in it. The author was crediting us with common intelligence.

What were these trees? The record says that they included "Every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." The word "every" is used, and presumably has intentional use. It was a perfect environment and lacked nothing that could give happiness.

There were two more trees. There was "The tree of

Life in the midst of the garden" and "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Now botany knows no such tree as "The tree of knowledge of good and evil." This must be a metaphor, and he must be using the word "tree" as the symbol of something else. Neither is there any such botanical tree as "The tree of Life." This also must be a symbolical use of the term.

Doubtless there were men of his day who believed in magic, and who might have pictured such trees just meaning actual trees with magical powers. But there is no trace of such use of magic elsewhere in the book, and the whole tone of the author's message makes it evident that he did not intend this for magic, but used the terms as metaphors or symbols to represent ethical facts. Hebrew literature constantly uses this kind of symbolism.

If these two trees are symbols or used in a metaphorical sense all the other trees must be also. We can hardly conceive of an author making a list and mixing up actual trees and metaphorical, symbolic trees all together. We could hardly think anyone would list together an elm tree, an oak tree, a genealogical tree, an apple tree, an axletree, etc.

All the trees were intended to be symbolical. Tree is one of the commonest metaphors used in literature. Trees stand for sources of profit and satisfaction. If that be the intention here the meaning is plain. There was "Every tree that was good for food." God put in the garden—provided for man—everything that was suited to minister to man's needs. Food is intended to include all physical needs, just as the expression "Daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer does.

Besides this there was "Every tree that is pleasant to the sight." This, in the same manner would symbolize everything that was suited to delight and satisfy man's æsthetic nature. God therefore put in the garden a complete store and supply of everything that would minister to all the desires of man, both physical and æsthetic. The word "every" would indicate that nothing more could be added. He furnished a perfect environment. All man's wants were perfectly supplied.

That is the one important fact that is basal in the whole incident. It is the "every," the perfect supply, that is significant. The whole movement turns on that point. They were fully supplied with everything that they could make use of. This is the first experiment, to which we have referred, which is being tried to see if it will yield the perfect life. (Personally for ourselves, we all think it would, at least we would be willing to risk it.)

If the trees were all symbolical the garden must be symbolical, too. Not a nice little square patch of ground with a picket fence around it and bushes and trees growing inside. It is rather meant just as a symbol for richness and security. God furnished man with supply for all his wants and wishes, all in richest profusion, and surrounded with his care and protection. The word "Eden" means "Delight"—a perfect environment and perfect supply in the land of Eden or Happiness.

III

10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four heads. 11 The name of the first is Pishon: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; 12 and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. 13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is [1]Hiddekel: that is it which goeth in front of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

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[1] That is, *Tigris*.

"A river went out of Eden to water the garden
And from thence it was parted and became four heads,"

and flowed to four specified countries. It did not rise in the garden. The river first came into the garden and heightened the delight of all its attractions—"It watered the garden." It also came into four described and presumably recognizable countries, evidently bestowing similar benefits on them, and also suggesting some relation between them and the story he is telling, or its moral lesson.

It is quite commonly conceived that these rivers are described in order to give us data with which to determine the location of the Garden of Eden. But if the garden was a symbol or metaphorical term would we not expect the rivers to be so, too? Why should we expect a geographical location for a metaphor?

In actual fact rivers do not "water" countries but drain them. However, in metaphorical usage, for some strange reason, we have gotten into the habit of speaking as though a river watered the places it passed through. In the second place, no river ever acts as this river is described as doing, flowing for a while as one stream and then dividing up into four streams flowing to widely separated places. Such a usage is not unknown when the word river is used in a metaphorical sense. With physical rivers just the opposite is true. Many streams come together to unite into one river.

In the next place it would be physically impossible for water to flow from any one place to the four different places that seem to be intended by the descriptions given here. The descriptions seem to indicate the four countries, India, Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. It would be practically impossible for water to flow from the Tigris-Euphrates region to India. Even if that identification is questioned, it would still be perfectly impossible for it to flow to Egypt, and impossible for any one of ordinary intelligence, even in very ancient times, to imagine that it could. Anyway, if the author meant this to be a way to show us the geographical location of Eden why should he take such a mystifying and problematic method to do it?

If as we have above shown, the garden itself and the rest is all a metaphor or symbol it would be only natural to suppose that the rivers also were to be interpreted in the same way. Consider these rivers, like the rest of the setting, metaphorical terms and the whole matter becomes clear and reasonable. We can see that they fit right into the picture, and that the author had a very important meaning that he wished to convey by them.

The word River is also one of the terms very commonly used in metaphor. "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God (Ps. 46:4). "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

"Blest river of Salvation
Pursue thine onward way,
Flow thou to every nation
Nor in thy fullness stay."

In the last case the river is supposed to act precisely as in our passage here.

As a metaphor, especially when it is conceived as watering a region, a river signifies something that enriches and makes more prosperous or happy. If that is the interpretation here it is easy to see what was the author's meaning. He evidently meant to say that something that added richness and happiness in the garden also came to these four countries and added richness, happiness and uplift there also. Or conversely, that which enriched the lives and was the glory of the people in these four most cultured countries of the then known world was also part of that which furnished the richness and happiness of Eden. Call it culture or civilization, or whatever it was that made these countries so great and noble, that also was included in the gifts which made the Eden state so happy; that was fully included in the experiment being tried.

That the author did intend to use the term "river" here with this significance is confirmed by the fact that it is used in exactly that way in other parts of the Bible. In Ezekiel 47:1-12, there is an account of a river that issued out from under the threshold of the house of God. That river as it flowed on got deeper and deeper, and it sweetened and restored all the land to which it came. That river would be as impossible of geographical identification as these would be, and the effects that it produced were quite similar.

Again in the last chapter of the Revelation we have "The River of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." It would be quite natural then that our author here, a Hebrew writer like the other two, when he uses the account of a river in very much the same way that they do, intends it to have the same kind of metaphorical interpretation.

Thus at the beginning, the middle and the end of the Bible we have symbolic rivers. This first was only the river of Culture. The second was the river of Salvation, and the last the river of Eternal Life.

What was the object the author had in introducing these rivers here? He wanted to say that the favors and advantages depicted as given to those in Eden were the same that we have now. It was not merely a primitive kind of luxurious abundance which they had. There was not lacking to them any of those great cultural privileges and other sources of happiness which we value. They had all the things which we prize and think conducive to welfare.

He wanted to emphasize that, because he intended to ask what effect did it have on them, and so what effect would it have on us if we had everything that could minister to our happiness. That was the purpose in introducing these rivers into the picture.

Was this river of culture and all the benefits of their perfect environment successful in securing happiness and the highest life in Eden? That is the question the author is going to answer in this Eden story. And we can apply his answer to ourselves, for those same rivers have flowed on to us. If it secured happiness for them it may for us. If it failed with them when they had all in most perfect abundance it probably would with us. It was to apply the lessons of the story of Eden to the people of his time and show that they were valid for them, and equally valid for us now, that he makes this river that first flows into the garden flow on out to all the great nations of the then world.

IV

15 And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16 And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

There were two special trees in the garden—two special things that appeal to the desires of men. One was

"The Tree of Life."

All men desire life, they value it, wish to keep it and prolong it. That desire is central in all our desires. The Tree of Life was

"In the midst of the garden."

The other was

"The tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

It is not quite so easy to precisely define this symbol, yet not difficult to form a general idea. We might perhaps re-translate the word "knowledge" as "experience." There is a difference between merely "knowing about" a thing and really knowing in the sense of experiencing it. We may "know about" love or hunger or tennis, but there is a sense in which we say we really know them when we have experienced them. It is apparently in this latter sense that the word Knowledge is used here. That tree meant the experiencing or tasting of both good and evil.

Now men do not, as a rule, resolve to do evil, to lead a bad life. What they do is to resolve that they will not be restricted. They will do both good and evil indifferently. They will do whatever they desire to do irrespective of whether it is good or evil. That was the meaning of this tree of which they were not to eat, this one kind of desire which they were not to indulge. Not the tree of Evil but of Good and Evil.

God had supplied them with everything that could minister to their real welfare and happiness. He knew that all evil acts, though they might seem to promise pleasure would in the end be hurtful, and so he warned them. The garden full of trees which God provided furnished the fullest enjoyment of *right* life. To eat of the other tree meant to not be content with that right life, but resolve to live a life unrestricted, seizing every experience that appealed, both good and bad.

Now the curiously interesting fact is that just now we are being flooded with advice and appeal, in the name of science, psycho-analysis or advanced thought, for just that kind of life. "Give free vent to your nature." "Don't repress your desires or you will form a dangerous 'complex.' " Claim the fullest degree of self-expression. All the rules of conscience, society and religion are merely "Atavistic inhibitions," merely irrational "Tabus." Do everything that your nature urges you to do.

It is not strange that there should be persons to advocate such a scheme, or that it should attain to popularity. But what is rather comically strange is that its advocates should think they were presenting something new—that they should put this forth as the newest product of the most advanced science. Here we see that our author several thousand years ago had precisely that same theory of life before him, and pictured it as a temptation that would lead to death.

It is rather interesting also to note that the Serpent in tempting them to adopt this mode of life used precisely the same argument that our advanced people are now using. "That is the way to have the fullest life." "Your eyes will be opened and ye will be as gods" (chap. 3:5). "You will achieve a higher level of existence—become super-men." We might be disposed to charge this author with being rather ungracious in thus putting the favorite plea of our neo-moralists into the mouth of the Devil, were it not that he wrote all this two or three thousand years before they ever thought of their ethical theories.

If that then is the meaning of this "Tree of the knowledge of good and evil," we can see that it is a tree that could not avoid being in the garden. It is not something that was arbitrarily put in. It is implied in the very fact of Man's conscience and free will. Without these man would not be man. It was not something which God, if he chose, could have left out and saved man from the danger of the fall, or something that he specially put in just for the purpose of tempting or testing him. It was there by the necessity of the case, and the best God could do was to warn man that it was deadly. That is what God did.

"In the day that thou eatest thereof
Thou shalt surely die."

V

This completes the equipment of the garden. As far as it goes it furnishes perfect environment. There is danger too, a tree of death. There is never any great good comes without some danger accompanying it. But something more was to be furnished. The trees of the garden represent perfect physical environment—perfect physical supply. But the environment would not be perfect unless the spiritual and social desires were supplied also. This also will be provided for. That is what is intended by the incident of the next passage.

18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. 19 And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him. 21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: 22 and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

"It is not good that man should be alone."

This is a major element of the perfect environment. There is nothing that affords so much satisfaction to man and is so absolutely essential for his happiness as companionship. Possessed of all the world, but the only one in it and hopelessly alone, you or I would be unutterably miserable. But with plenty of congenial companionship we could be happy even in poverty. God said:

"I will make a help meet for him."

God proposed to find him a help or companion, and just the kind of companion that would be most suitable and satisfactory to him.

The first plan is to try to find that companionship among the beings already in the world—the other animals which were joint inhabitants of the world with him. This is rather a strange conceit of the author, but it links up with his position in the first chapter, where he has man created on the same day as those other animals. And it is also an additional device to emphasize man's pre-eminence by the fact that, search as they would, none could be found that was qualified to furnish congenial companionship.

God brought all the animals to man, and he rejected them all for companionship. Though he did so yet he gave names to them all by which they would be called. There is a rather singular interpretation sometimes drawn out of this passage. It has been suggested that this means the beginning of language, this giving names to all the animals. But that is surely far fetched and fanciful. Repeating over the names of animals is surely an insignificant part of our use of language. No one could believe that language would originate in that way.

But there is a rather obvious and appropriate meaning to be suggested. Giving the animals names is recorded in connection with rejecting them for companionship. They were not suitable for companions but they were in some relation to him—his subjects (chap. 1:26-28). This was something like classifying and cataloguing them, as a manager should. The important part, however, of the whole passage is that they were not suitable for companionship.

"There was not found a help meet for him."

This passage has also been pointed to as a Creation narrative—a second and variant account of the creation of animals. But such a view is very superficial. That is not the motive of the passage at all. That is not what is occupying the mind of the writer. He is only thinking of God looking for a companion for man. He had just said that the man himself was made out of the ground. It was to avoid making the animals appear higher in origin than man that he takes the pains to specify that they too were made out of the ground.

"Out of the ground Jehovah formed every
beast of the field
And brought them to the man."

There is nothing said as to when they were "made out of the ground," and it would be a forced exegesis to draw any conclusions bearing on that question. Companionship for man is the governing thought of the whole passage. The animals that were made were brought to the man to see if they would supply him companionship. He gave them their appropriate assignments by naming them but not one was found that was suitable to afford him real companionship.

But God did provide him a companion. The story that tells about it is one of the Bible gems that has always caught the imagination. It pays the highest compliment to woman and assigns her the highest place that has ever been given her.

It is rather remarkable that such a conception should have been formed away back there when woman was everywhere so slightingly thought of. And it is specially strange that it should have been by this author who in all his book does not ascribe a single noble act to any of his women characters and does have something bad to say about every one of them. Was it that the author had such an extremely high conception of what woman and wife might and ought to mean that, disappointed at the mediocre reality that fell to his lot, he became bitter and painted all the women in his book the way we have seen?

God took part of the man himself—a part nearest to his heart—and of that he formed the woman that was to be his companion. Not only does he take occasion by this method of her creation to glorify woman, but the author puts into the mouth of the man the highest conception of the marriage relation, the one that is used as the ideal to the present day, and quoted in our Christian marriage ceremonies.

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother
And shall cleave unto his wife
And they shall be one flesh."

VI

The scene is now all set for the experiment. Man is made, endowed with a high nature by the breath of God, and he has now been supplied with everything that can minister to his happiness and well being, physical, æsthetic, cultural and social. The best has been done for him that can be done. Will he make the best use of it and attain to the highest life and happiness, or will he, in spite of it all—or because of it all—ruin himself?

The author's answer is an answer of failure. In spite of his perfect environment and supply for all his desires, man was discontented, broke over the bounds and ruined all. This first experiment was a failure.

3 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. 6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

I believe we will get the truer view of the situation if we recognize the meaning of the "Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil" as it was interpreted above. It is usually considered that it was just an arbitrary restriction that God made in order to test them. He gave them a large supply of good things that they could freely take, but he purposely put one thing before them that he knew they would want, forbade it and expected them to show their allegiance by denying themselves that thing just to obey him.

Now that might be a very plausible and very efficient test. It would be a test of loyalty and obedience. But ask yourself if it would not take an unusually high grade of loyalty and obedience to stand that test. It might be a suitable test for the senior class in the Kingdom of Heaven, but not for the Kindergarten of human nature. Our human nature is what it is, and nothing adds so much irresistible attraction to a thing as to have it forbidden. God would get little credit for wisdom if he really expected anyone would pass that test.

But that is a wrong conception of what the situation was. This direction about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was not a restriction but a favor. The author intended to let us see that it was so by saying that it concerned tasting Evil. It was something that could not help being in the garden, a risk that could not be avoided if man had free will and was really man.

God warns him that it is dangerous and deadly. That is what the direction about it means. God told them that if they should eat it they would die—not die because God would kill them for punishment but because eating it would make them die. Just as the housewife puts the sign "Poison" on some bottle and warns the children that it is deadly.

That is true now of eating that fruit—of taking that attitude toward right and wrong. It kills us spiritually. And as it was just as true then, that would be the interpretation that we should put on God's "command." If we but understood we would see that all God's commands are just warnings for our good.

God bestowed favor and only favor on them, every favor that was possible. He gave them every good thing that they could enjoy and warned them of the dangers. That is the real state of the case. That is the real condition which constitutes this first experiment that is being tried to see if it is the road to man's highest happiness. Did it succeed? Is it the road?

Here again the author shows literary tact. He knows that almost everyone would divine what is going to be his answer to the problem. We all know that the more millions a man has the more eager he is to get more millions —even to commit crime to get them. Of course he is going to say that in spite of all the perfect wealth of favors that were heaped upon him, man broke over the traces and ruined himself. There is no hope of featuring this as a sudden great discovery, or making the mere answer attract any interest. So he adopts the expedient of giving his answer by means of something that does have interest.

He reports the fact that man sinned by means of an analysis of the process that led him into sin. And so he has given one of the finest descriptions of the nature and ways of temptation. That is really the meaning of chapter 3:1-7, though in form it seems to be merely the information that the experiment failed and ended in disaster.

First he gives the somewhat comforting thought that this sin was caused by temptation from without. This is true of most sin now. This may be somewhat of a salve to our self-respect, but unfortunately it cannot give us any assurance of safety. Doctors tell us that the inflammation that comes into our cuts and wounds is entirely caused by microbes from without, but unfortunately those microbes are so abundant everywhere that there is not much assurance of safety. Just so there are in our experience microbes of temptation always present and active.

He is very skilful in his choice of a symbol for the tempter. Perhaps for us this very story has increased somewhat our loathing for the snake. But nearly all men have the same feeling, and the natural character of the creature makes it an appropriate symbol.

We think of the snake as sly, deceitful, wriggling a crooked path hidden in the grass till he sneaks up to us and attacks us, perhaps still unseen. He is not frightful looking like the tiger, makes no frightful noise or display in his attack, and shows no sign of great strength, yet his bite poisons our system, causes after a while great suffering and in the end death. Moreover, he is really a very brilliant and artistically beautiful creature, and with some weak victims he has the power to so fascinate them that they cannot move or run away.

Each and every particular of this is quite characteristic of temptation, and so very appropriately the serpent was the symbol that the author chose to be the agent of this temptation.

The author illustrates the very gradual way in which temptation makes its approach. We will note how it worked in the story here and it often works the same way in the temptations in our own lives. The tempter came at first with something that seemed entirely innocent and merely casual conversation, but yet it had concealed in it a tinge of poison.

"Is it true that there is one of these beautiful trees whose fruit God has forbidden you to eat?" Just a natural, casual remark. Some interpreters have suggested that it was a mocking sneer: "Won't God let you eat from *any* of these trees?" But that would be far less of a temptation than the other interpretation.

Because the poison was so slight and so disguised it was the more effective. The suggestions were so natural and so insidious. It looked strange to an outsider that he should forbid any tree. They looked too good to waste. Why did he put them there if they were not good and not to be used? Might she not be mistaken in thinking he had forbidden one, or if he had was he not possibly unreasonable in doing so? In any case she was thrown upon the defensive, and it is always weakening when we think any act has to be apologized for.

The author rather hints that the ground had already been prepared to receive the seeds of temptation. There apparently had been much thinking and perhaps a little rankling over the supposed restriction, for in her reply she adds a little to God's prohibition.

> "God hath said ye shall not eat of it
> *Neither shall ye touch it*
> Lest ye die."

God had said nothing about not touching it.

That little sign was enough to show the tempter that the way was open and he could come right forward with his main attack. He does so, following up both his own insinuations and the feeling of protest or injury that he sees is in her mind.

> "Ye shall not surely die
> God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof
> Your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as God
> Knowing good and evil."

This is a perfect broadside of fire, an attack in force to storm the works at once. In the first place he positively declares that it is all a mistake and she may eat it with perfect safety. This was really the effective part of the attack. The author realized the psychological principle that men are more moved by bold assertion than by argument. Every successful evangelist and political speaker knows that. Tell the people what you want them to believe, and tell it over with confidence and conviction, and if they are not unfavorably disposed toward you there is at least a fifty-fifty chance that they will believe you. Begin by making an argument to prove your point, and they will immediately begin to think up counter arguments to combat you. After you have asserted the thing very strenuously and gained at least a preliminary, tentative assent, then you may bring forth your arguments to back it up or to account for its being true. That is the way the tempter proceeded here.

He states strenuously and confidently that they will receive no harm, and then backs it up by showing how there came to be such a command, that the threat was not true and that the very command itself was a proof that the eating would do good and not harm. Incidentally also he intended to rouse a feeling of resentment toward God, and so take away any reluctance she might have, after all God's kindness, to go contrary to his wishes.

"It is easy to see why God made that restriction. He is jealous of you. He is afraid that you will get to be as great as he is." A keen covered appeal there to her pride. "That is the reason that God has forbidden it, and it is proof that it is good, the most valuable tree in the whole garden." Perhaps there is just a suggestion that that is the way God himself got to be so wise—by eating this fruit.

All this would seem to prove and justify his strong assertion that the fruit was good and would not hurt her. And, anyway, a forbidden thing always tends to have a special value. The attack was successful. Her resistance weakened and broke. She looked and longed, yielded and was lost.

There were three ways that she was attracted.

"She saw that the tree was good for food
That it was a delight to the eyes
And that the tree was to be desired to make one wise."

These are just the three elements that always make most appeal. "Good for food." There will be profit in it. "A delight to the eyes." It was attractive and fascinating. It appealed to one's æsthetic desires and sensuous appetites. "It would make one wise." It was going to be a new experience. There is a thrill in entering a new kind of life that we did not know before. We like to be thought sophisticated, up to date, not tame innocents but persons that know all about life. This is a specially insidious pull that causes a large part of the waywardness, especially of adolescents.

It says that *she saw* that the tree was good in these respects. But did she see or merely think she saw—merely hear what someone else said and believe it—the great wizard which modern psychology has discovered, called "Suggestion." Great multitudes of our present generation just now seem likely to be swept off their feet by it. They "have discovered" something that negatives the traditional ideas about marriage, sex, self-expression and the like, or something that disproves the tenets of their mother's religion. Really they have not discovered anything. Merely there are a lot of suggestions flying around thick everywhere in the air, and they are believing them. Fortunately most of us have time to reconsider and really see the truth and be saved, but poor Eve did not have that chance till it was too late.

I suppose we ought to have noted that the one chosen for the temptation was the woman. At least in the author's estimation the woman was supposed to be the weaker and more easily influenced one. The tempter made his attack at the weakest point, as is usually the case.

But this is not the end. We have not yet reached the real point of the story. The critical movement is yet to come. For in the author's mind this is not yet the victory of evil. The man has not yet been reached. The man is the real object aimed at. The question is how the man is to be overcome. That is to be the decisive fact. This he treats in very few words, but its importance must not be overlooked.

"She gave unto her husband with her
And he did eat."

That was the means by which the tempter accomplished his real objective, and what otherwise he would perhaps have been unable to effect.

Here is a principle which is one of the greatest causes of the evils of the world. Perhaps the largest part of the evils that blight and poison life are caused by following our friends, imitating and following the bad practices of others. That inducement succeeds where other temptations fail. It seems to be the intention of the author here to imply that the man might not have yielded to the wiles of the serpent but he did yield to this social influence, the enticing by a friend.

Someone has made the suggestion that Adam knew when he ate the fruit that it was going to bring disaster, but he knew that Eve had eaten and was sure to be killed or driven out of the garden, and he was not willing to live without her—was going to follow her into the same punishment that she had to endure. Persons have been known to do that, and it is possible, but we do not have to go that far. There is no question but just the influence of example and the invitation or persuasion of companions and friends is one of the most powerful as well as one of the most frequent of the causes that lead to conduct that is wrong.

Such then is the outcome of this first experiment which the author tries, to find the way to the most perfect life. This plan for perfect happiness is the most obvious plan and the one that we all would first choose. Give a man everything he needs, supply all his wants and warn him of his dangers, surely then he should be perfectly happy and perfectly content.

But our author thinks otherwise, and the story he uses to give his answer we will all admit is perfectly true to life and quite convincing. That road will not lead to perfect contentment but to disaster.

It is true, of course, that this is not the usual interpretation that is put on this story. And it need not be the only one. A story or a parable may teach several separate lessons, and the same thing have different aspects. Jesus in one and the same parable says that he is "The door of the sheep," and that he is "The good shepherd." The apostle Paul, because it fitted his argument, used this story of Eden as an illustration to show that if the first father went wrong all his descendants would be affected by that wrong, and later Greek philosophy built a great system of doctrine upon that thought.

We may fully concede the propriety of St. Paul making this use of the story to illustrate his thought, but it would be unfortunate to let that lesson overshadow and crowd out this other very important lesson of practical life. How much profitable instruction for our lives is there in merely looking back and thinking that something done by someone away back there has made us have bad natures and do the bad things we do?

It is quite a different thing if we realize that this story means us now, and that the things related as done are meant as a parable of the way we do now. The lesson for us to learn is that having all our wants too easily supplied is likely to spell not happiness but disaster, so we had better not make that our major life motive. There is some very important "Instruction in righteousness" in that interpretation.

VII

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. 8 And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And Jehovah God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. 11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? 12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13 And Jehovah God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

They have eaten of the tree of knowledge and it has brought them knowledge, but it was not a knowledge that would do them any good. Their eyes were opened, but the only thing they saw with their opened eyes was the fact that they were naked. In a previous verse it had been said:

> "And they were both naked, the man and his wife
> And were not ashamed."

Shame, either mental or physical, is the product of wrong

—wrong either done or imagined. The author is correct in his psychology. They were no more naked than they were before, but now they have the knowledge of sin, and shame is born.

"They sewed fig leaves together
And made themselves aprons"

. . . excuses. Another touch of nature. When men have committed wrong or crime how quick they are to make aprons of excuses—and how little they really cover.

What will be next? What will happen now? If, as commonly claimed, the Old Testament God is only a God of vengeance and law there would be nothing now but to execute the criminals and clear the stage. But that is not what the author depicts. Indeed even in this day of their doom and punishment we can see signs that can plausibly be construed as suggesting hope and salvation.

The very fact that God came to talk with them at all instead of just inflicting the punishment might seem to imply that he had some future plan for them. The account in verse twenty-one that to relieve their feeling of shame he "made coats of skin and clothed them," shows that his feeling for them was more sorrow for their loss than anger and vengeance. And the so-called "protevangelium" in verse fifteen, that "The seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head" is a positive and bright note of promise.

"They heard the voice of Jehovah God
Walking in the garden in the cool of the day."

That they heard the voice was a sign of promise on their part. God had come to seek them, and they had heard his voice. Many do not hear his voice when he comes to seek them after their fall. They heard it, listened and hope revived again. Peter after he had denied his Lord heard the voice and "went out and wept bitterly," and Peter was saved. Judas did not or would not hear the voice but rushed away to despair and destroyed himself. There was hope for them when they heard the voice.

"In the cool of the day."

That is the time when the voice is heard. It is in the quiet hour that conscience makes its voice heard. It may be all very well as long as we keep busy, but when the quiet, vacant hour comes, or the quiet hour for sleep, then the voice sounds. After the murder of Duncan, Shakespeare has Macbeth say:

"The voice says, 'sleep no more,
Macbeth hath murdered sleep.' "

So it was in the quiet hours that the man and his wife heard the voice of God.

"And hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God
Among the trees of the garden."

That is where men still try to hide themselves when they hear the accusing voice. These trees, as you remember, symbolize the profits and pleasures of life. That is where they tried to hide. When men have done wrong and are afraid of God that is precisely where they try to hide themselves—among the trees of the garden, the pleasures and profits of life. They plunge into pleasure and gayety, or they absorb themselves more completely in business, and often they do succeed in hiding themselves or getting so far away that they do not any more hear the voice.

"Where art thou?"

What was there in that at which to be afraid? Doubtless it was just the same call that he had made to them when he had come many times before, and they had run gladly to meet him.

"I was afraid because I was naked,
And I hid myself."

The truth is beginning to come out. The crisis is at hand.

"Who told thee that thou wast naked?
Hast thou eaten of the tree
Whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest
not eat?"

Now begins the sordid part. The worst of it is that it is quite true to life still. That is what gives all this story value. It is not written merely as an interesting story of long ago, or as the tale of a great ancestor's badness. As a parable it is meant to be a picture of ourselves, just what we do now.

If the man had said, "Yes, God, I broke your command and no doubt deserve to be punished," we would have considerable sympathy for him and want him to have another chance, and we would be inclined to think that God might feel that way, too.

But outside of cheap romance and the stage that is not the way guilt ever does. In fact it commonly does just the opposite. If you have ever visited a prison and talked with the convicts you were surprised to learn what a lot of comparatively innocent men were victims of the law's injustice, or had got into trouble through things that were not their fault—according to their account. Adam ran true to form in this respect. It was not really his fault that he had eaten. Indeed, he rather implied that it was God himself that was most to blame. It was God that was responsible for bringing the temptation upon him that he was not able to resist.

> "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me
> She gave me of the tree and I did eat."

"If you had not given me that woman I never would have got into this trouble." We need not say anything more about this answer of the man, for "there is nothing more to be said," except that it shows how completely the feeling of guilt and fear of punishment can undermine a man's character and nullify his manhood.

How about the woman? The same effect there, though she at least had the grace not to try to lay the blame upon God.

> "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat."

It was not necessary to question the serpent, for he was the villain of the plot, with no pretence to be anything but the tempter and enemy of all good.

VIII

14 And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. 20 And the man called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. 21 And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them.

22 And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—23 therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Nothing remains now but to let the punishment fall and close the scene. The test is over. The experiment has been made, and failed. Even with every provision for his happiness and well being man has not only not found the perfect life, but he has revolted and lost all. He has eaten of that tree whose fruit is death, from which protecting love had tried to warn him.

It is rather interesting to note that the author has assigned as the punishment suffered just those hardships in man's lot which the other creatures do not have, as though he meant to imply that they had kept their estate and man had forfeited his. Animals do not have to toil and sweat to earn their bread. The ground does not "bring forth thorns and thistles"—that is, baffle and thwart their labor—for they find natural products freely growing for their food. Child-birth with them is not a process of pain, nor is the female enslaved and bound down by the male.

At any rate he has intentionally given us for the punishment of their wrong-doing not some artificial and directly inflicted stroke by God, but just the evils which we find in our ordinary life, and in considerable part they are the result of wrong-doing directly or indirectly.

As for the serpent, he paints just its despised, hated and groveling position as its punishment.

The closing verses of the chapter contain some rather puzzling statements. Perhaps we ought not to seek for specific interpretations for all the minutia of the story. Some things may well be intended just to logically and artistically round out the picture. We may, however, see that for the man who has repudiated the laws of good and evil the angel with the flaming sword of conscience will bar the gate of return to the garden of peace and fellowship.

The story seems to use the popular conception that restrictions of right and wrong do not lie upon God, so man, by refusing to be bound by those restrictions was arrogating to himself the same status as God (vs. 22). For such a being to become immortal and live forever would be calamity, so he must be shut off from the tree of life "lest he eat and live forever." Not that this implied some definite historical time or condition when man was likely to become immortal. It is just a logical completion of the picture, just a philosophical conclusion by the author that for such a man to live forever would not be good.

Yet we may notice that the "Tree of Life" is not to be forever forbid. There is to come a time when there will be access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:2). But it will only be for those who have been rescued from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and been restored again to obedient fellowship with God.

IX

We must not omit to notice here the words in verse fifteen, which are usually called the "protevangelium," the first proclamation of salvation.

> "I will put enmity between thee and the woman
> And between thy seed and her seed.
> He shall bruise thy head
> And thou shalt bruise his heel."

The theologians would interpret this to mean that Christ should destroy the power of Satan—bruise his head—but Satan would kill the body of Christ—bruise his heel.

Certainly there is a very suggestive analogy or picture here of the death and the victory of Christ. And if we consider these writings as specially inspired by God we may well believe that meaning was intended, and we who live after the time of Christ and know of his death and victory should recognize the resemblance and consider it intentional or prophetic. But as a gospel of salvation for ancient times—that is to say, that anyone before the coming of Christ could have divined that it had that meaning and by that means be able to put trust in the coming Christ and his sacrifice for salvation—it is of course utterly impossible.

Yet there is a sense in which it was an "evangelium" or gospel of hope even to people then. Aside from the great fulfilment in Christ, it might be to them a prophecy of victory in the continual great struggle for the right and between good and evil. It would convey to them the promise and assurance that eventually the struggles of men for the right should certainly prevail over the forces of evil—the seed of the woman prevail over the seed of the serpent. That was a very cheering and important assurance to men in the long, long struggle they have had to make against wrong. It is the assurance that there will be victory in the end.

In the struggle man should suffer—his heel be bruised. We see he always has had to suffer in the struggle with evil. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" (Acts 7:52). But in the end man and the right shall be the victor and the forces of evil be destroyed.

That glad consummation has not yet been attained. But we still believe it certainly shall be some time. So that protevangelium is still to us, as it has always been from the first, a prophecy of hope.

CHAPTER IV

Efficiency

4 And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have [1]gotten a man with *the help of* Jehovah. 2 And again she bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And Jehovah said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire; but do thou rule over it. 8 And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? 10 And he said, What has thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12 when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth. 13 And Cain said unto Jehovah, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the ground; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth; and it will come to pass, that whosoever findeth me will slay me. 15 And Jehovah said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And Jehovah appointed a sign for Cain, lest any finding him should smite him.

16 And Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of [2]Nod, [3]on the east of Eden. 17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called

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[1] Heb. *kanah,* to get.
[2] That is, *Wandering.*
[3] Or, *in front of.*

the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. 18 And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael; and Mehujael begat Methushael; and Methushael begat Lamech. 19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. 20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents and *have* cattle. 21 And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe. 22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, [4]the forger of every cutting instrument of [5]brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. 23 And Lamech said unto his wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
For [6]I have slain a man for wounding me,
And a young man for bruising me:
24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

I

WITH chapter four begins a new story. It couples on to the preceding story in a way, but the movement is an entirely different movement. It does not take up the situation with which the last chapter ended—the thorns and thistles, sweat and toil, lost Eden and flaming sword. He does not start with these and work out a sequel telling how man faced his new destiny. That is all entirely ignored. There is an entirely different problem, and entirely different thought in the mind of the author.

I suppose we would call it the story of "The First Murder." That is the way it was told to us in childhood, and that is what, when we read it now, it seems to be. Cain was jealous of his brother Abel because God favored his sacrifice, and so he murdered him, and then God—this part we never quite understood—and then

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[4] Or, *an instructor of every artificer.*
[5] Or, *copper* (and so elsewhere).
[6] Or, *I will slay.*

God scolded him, and he went off and became a great and prosperous man.

Surely there must be some other meaning, some other message. We had better examine more carefully and see if we cannot find what was the real thought of the author which he wished to convey by this story. The murder just as a murder could hardly be the main subject. It certainly is not treated as a murder should be to carry a moral lesson. Also the murder has no apparent connection with all the latter half of the story. There must be some thought in the author's mind that includes that latter half as well as the first part.

If the murder were the central thing then it would be hard even to defend the story from the charge of immorality. It would tend to teach that murder was a rather trivial thing if God treated it so leniently. Human law has usually decreed that murder should be punished by death, and in chapter 9 : 6, this is confirmed by divine law. But here God, dealing with this case of murder, not only does not inflict the death penalty but takes special measures to protect the murderer. He makes him safe, threatening extreme punishment to anyone that should harm him. Should a murderer be made safer than other men? And what of the prosperity and great feats of Cain and his descendants? Also what is the use and meaning of the little poem with which it all ends? What is the place of all these in the story?

All this would apply just the same if it was an old folk tale as if it was the author's original story. Such an unreasonable, pointless story could never grow up or be handed down as a folk tale. Surely there must have been some other thought, some other meaning to which all these other facts were appropriate.

In our interpretation we have proposed to consider Cain as the type of the Efficient Man, the aggressive, self-assertive man, who has more ability than other men and works that ability for all that is in it, entirely without regard to the rights and interests of others. His very name suggests that interpretation. The word Cain means "to get," and we in this day are calling that type of man "a go-getter."

That this type of man will commit murder, or what murder in the story is intended to symbolize is quite commonplace. You may kill a man socially, politically, financially and in a variety of other safe and genteel ways. That is the method by which such efficient men usually climb—by stepping on fallen rivals.

The German philosopher Nietzsche is a frank advocate of that type of man. He urges that efficiency and the development of the super-man are the great hope and goal of the world. He claims that it is not only the right but the duty of this super-man for his own development to disregard the weak and to ruthlessly trample on every thing and everyone that hinders his success. Cain would be a man of precisely the type this style of philosophy calls for.

If that is intended to be the meaning of Cain we can understand why the latter part of the story is a great blaze of prosperity. That is what we expect with that kind of men. Let us say then, that the author intends this to be the story of what efficiency can do. He is taking that as the second attempted solution of the problem of world success. He has tried the plan of "environment," the perfect supply of all wants, in Eden, and that failed. Now he is going to try a régime of efficiency to see if the answer is not that the highest good is to be obtained by the widest development of the efficient man. He will have plenty of sympathy in his experiment, for that certainly is the opinion of the great majority of the world today.

II

We may begin at the beginning of the story. To Eve is born a son, and she says:

"I have gotten a man with (the help of) Jehovah."

Commentators have wearied their wits trying to unravel the mystery of these words, or to change and patch them up so as to make a satisfactory meaning. The words "the help of," printed in Italics in the Bible are of course not in the original Hebrew text.

But there is no need to patch them up or change them. The author knew what he was saying and said what he meant to say. One wonders if all the commentators were superannuated old bachelors that they have failed to see a meaning so plain. The author wrote down just exactly what mother Eve said when her first baby came.

"I have gotten a man with (or just like) Jehovah."
"Look here! My little Jehovah! Isn't he a little angel!"

That is what every mother since her time has said when her first baby came, and why should not Eve have said it too? Why do we insist on expunging every trace of human nature out of all the Bible characters?

And it is quite possible that she saw reason to continue her high estimate of the treasure she had got, even after the second baby, Abel, came and was welcomed, though not with quite such extravagant words. For we may believe that Cain was a specially fine baby and a fine young lad, and developed into an exceptionally fine and able man. The author certainly intended to represent that it was so.

The intention is to picture Cain from the start as a superior person. It is one of the principles of anthropology that certain occupations or modes of life mark the successive steps in the advance toward civilization. It is considered an advance when the Bedouin shepherd settles down and becomes a farmer cultivating the soil. That is rated a higher mode of life, a step in progress. Cain had made that step of progress. He had become "a tiller of the ground." Abel was still in the lower grade, "a keeper of sheep." This alone might mark Cain out as intended to be the type of the efficient man.

In the course of time they brought sacrifices to Jehovah. Cain is mentioned first, as though he were the originator of the idea.

"And Abel, he also brought."

Abel copied his older and more brilliant brother. Each of them brought what he had. Cain brought the fruits of the ground and Abel one of his sheep. There is no indication here of disparagement of either, although it is specified that Abel brought,

"Of the firstling of the flock and of the fat thereof,"

as though, being humbler and less confident than his brother he made more special effort to get something that would be worthy.

Why did they bring the sacrifices? Various conjectures are advanced. Some of them may have been in the mind of the author. Perhaps it is enough merely to suppose that some device was necessary in order to bring the brothers into conflict, and this was the most convenient device that suggested itself to the author. We must remember too that sacrifice and the ceremonies of religion had a much more established and recognized place in the life of all men then than they have now.

Abel's offering was accepted by Jehovah and Cain's was not. Why? Again various conjectures are advanced. It is suggested that Abel's offering included the shedding of blood and taking of life, which the Hebrew law made essential in an offering for forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). Cain's offering did not contain this. Doubtless this thought could not be absent from the mind of a Hebrew writer in recording these two forms of offering of which one was rejected. Another suggestion is that this was God's way of first indicating to men what was the proper kind of offering to make. By letting them bring what they chose and by his accepting one of them he showed which was the proper kind.

But the author of Hebrews doubtless gives the right explanation. It is the one which in fact is indicated by God himself in the text here to be the right one. "*By faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). God says to Cain: "Why are you angry and your countenance cast down? If thou doest well thy sacrifice would have been accepted and then thy countenance would be lifted up. The fault was not in your sacrifice, the fault was in you" (cf. Amos 5:21-24).

Though prosperous, efficient and successful his success had been at the expense of character. Could we better characterize the experience of a great many of the conspicuously efficient and successful men of our day?

Cain could not stand it for any other to be ahead of him in even one thing. If his brother was going to be a rival he must be gotten rid of. So he watches for a suitable opportunity and kills him.

The narrative says that they had talked it over. "Cain talked with Abel his brother" (authorized version). It is very possible that Abel had tried to make the most of his one point of superiority over his more brilliant and illustrious brother. Cain could not stand that, so he had to get rid of him.

At any rate, the story might equally well have been written today. The great efficient, successful man cannot stand a rival in his business or in his quest of office and honors, and so if he ever gets the opportunity he kills him. We merely have a little less drastic but equally effective way of doing it now.

That is all the notice we need to take of this murder as part of the story, for it is not at all the principal part.

III

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

God meets with Cain and asks about his brother. Cain answers, "I know not, am I my brother's keeper?" Conscience comes to the great, successful man sometimes, and he begins to think about the old friends and associates that he has had to sweep out of his path. But he quiets that conscience with the claim that it is none of his business. It is all part of the game. If the other man has not succeeded that is his affair. "I have enough to do to look after my own affairs. I cannot take care of him too. Am I my brother's keeper?"

The evident intention of this passage is to imply that we are our brother's keeper. We are all bound together in such a social solidarity that his failure is charged up as our fault, especially if our success has been at the expense of his loss. Rather an advanced sociological standard to be taught so long ago.

"The ground which hath drunk in thy brother's blood
 Shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength."

This was the penalty denounced against the efficient man who had slain his brother. If we recognize the metaphorical or allegorical character of the whole story we can trace the items of this sentence. As a symbol it will be equally true of the aggressive, predatory efficient man today.

As a symbol the "ground" from which he should enjoy fruits may stand for all that from which he and all men usually expect to reap satisfactions and happiness. It would include friends, society, art, amusements, the world in general, all the sources of a man's enjoyment. That is the ground from which he would expect to enjoy as fruits the pleasures and satisfactions of life.

Do we need to prove that for the predatory, aggressive man that soil will no longer yield him the fruitage of happiness and satisfactions? For answer we only need to turn to the daily papers, with long lists of rich men's names filling up the roster from the divorce courts and the reports of suicides and other wrecked lives. The ground that should yield them the fruits of happiness and comfort is cursed and does not yield them those fruits.

It would not be difficult to identify the other elements of his punishment. "Driven out from the face of the ground." The old home friends, the love and esteem of society, all that interplay of community and social good will which he has affronted by his aggressions and lost. The life of a wanderer—battle, struggle, "frenzied finance." "And from thy face shall I be hid." Cain made much more of that loss of God's favor than such men do today, though it is no less a fatal loss to them now.

There was a yellow streak of cowardice in Cain. There usually is in the bully and the lawless aggressor. He is very bold to trample on the rights of others, but just as soon as justice begins to turn and threaten him he begins to whine.

> "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

It is just as true of the man of his type today. As soon as the law begins to stiffen up to stop his predatory practices or make him give back his illgotten gains there is immediately a great cry of "spoliation" and "judicial robbery." The great classical example of this was the old time saloon. It is still the cry of unfair big business and all fraudulent and overbearing combinations.

> "It will come to pass that whosoever findeth me will kill me."

Well, would that be any worse than when he slew his brother Abel? He was the last man that ought to complain of the danger of getting killed. Evidently he saw that God was not going to kill him. It was only the danger that some one else would kill him that he was whining about.

God did not punish him with death, as it was later distinctly declared that murder deserved (chap. 9:6). On the contrary he took special pains to preserve him from the natural retaliation from other men, his associates. If the murder of Abel was the chief thought of the narrative it would be hard to explain why God did this. God might have seen fit to not kill him himself and give him a lesser punishment, but why should he take steps to give him special safety? His mere cowardly whining was not a sufficient reason.

But if this is intended to be rather the story of the self-asserting efficient man, and the murder symbol means just what we see in big business and diplomacy today, we can see a meaning quite appropriate. The reference is to retaliation and revenge, not judicial punishment. A cut-throat war of retaliation is never a good thing. It is usually a far greater evil than the acts of aggression that bring it on.

It is so in business. It is conspicuously so in international affairs. A large proportion of all the wars that all down through history have drenched the world in blood have been wars of retaliation, and the evils and miseries of these wars of retaliation have always been more than "seven times" greater than those aggressions that brought them on. So Jehovah was quite right in denouncing vengeance to be taken "seven fold" to deter men from the practice of retaliation.

IV

So much then for that part. But that is not the story. We will miss the whole meaning if we think that that is the story the author means to tell. This is all merely introducing the actor of the story, merely what in the movies would be called "the close up," to let us get a good view of the character he is going to put on the stage to do the real act.

We have already said that this story would be harmful and its moral bad if its intent was merely to give the story of a murder and say that God condoned the crime and gave the murderer the special privilege of protection from harm. Not only would that leave a harmful moral impression but it would leave all the rest of the narrative without any value or appropriateness.

But when we interpret it, as proposed, to be the story of efficiency and the efficient man, it not only all has meaning, but we find it to be a keen and masterly handling of one of the most important and difficult questions. It is a discussion of the problem of efficiency as the supreme rule for life. Is that the quality that we should exalt as our ideal? We have just had the plan of perfect environment in Eden, and found it to fail. Now he tries this as the next hopeful plan.

If that is his intention we find that every act and detail fits perfectly into it. There is no question but efficiency will bring natural prosperity, and Cain and his line were pre-eminently prosperous. The story depicts, item by item, almost everything that would in those days be counted as indicating success.

We have seen that Cain had already shown proof of his superiority in having advanced to the superior status of an agriculturist. After killing his brother—clearing the rivals from his path—he goes out to begin his career.

"Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah."

He gives up reliance on "the presence of Jehovah." He went to live

"On the east of Eden"

Eden means Delight, and east typifies hope. He went where he expected to be "on easy street," though it turned out to be "The land of Nod," wandering, struggle, unrest. But when he got into his stride he was completely and conspicuously successful. Most great captains of industry seem to have at first such a period of hard initiation.

We may remark one by one all the marks and items of prosperity which the author records for Cain and for the line of his posterity. It certainly is the intention to mark this as the road to natural success.

1. He had a wife and a normal, competent life.
2. He had a son, a family and social stability.
3. He built a city. This to the men of that time would mean the utmost degree of prosperity. He became one of the great ones of the earth.
4. He called the city after the name of his son. He achieved rank, family name, dynastic eminence.

So much for Cain himself. How about his posterity, the line that he founded? There is where we would look for the full and ultimate proof of success.

To the Hebrew the number seven always carries a mystical importance or idea of completeness. Counting down seven generations we would expect to find what the author intended to be the result of this line or régime for good or evil. So the author gives the line of descendants of Cain down for seven generations. We may note in passing the similarity of names in this list to those given in the list of Seth's descendants in chapter five. We shall refer to this later.

The seventh generation counting Adam is Lamech, or counting only from Cain it is the three sons and one daughter of Lamech. Either of these can be considered as giving the result of the experiment in their several appropriate ways, the children as showing what was accomplished, and the father as head, standing and glorifying in what he thought had been accomplished. In the seventh generation then we find:

A. Lamech is pictured with two wives, which would naturally be interpreted to symbolize opulence with sensuous luxury. The two names, Adah and Zillah might be translated "Adornment" and "Comfort."

B. The first son was Jabal.

"Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle." This was evidently intended to symbolize wealth. The word cattle was used in ancient times as the symbol of wealth almost as we use the word gold. Our word "pecuniary" is derived from the Latin word for cattle, and the word translated here literally means "possessions."

It is true that in an earlier part of the story it was a mark of the efficiency of Cain that he had advanced from the merely pastoral life to that of the agriculturist. But long after people had settled down to permanent agricultural life large herds of cattle were still considered a sign of great wealth. "The cattle on a thousand hills."

C. "Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp and the pipe." This stands for music, and as it is symbolic we may consider it to imply all the fine arts. They had advanced to a stage where art and the higher forms of culture flourished.

D. Tubal-Cain. "An instructor of every artificer in brass and iron" (authorized version). This naturally stands for tools, instruments, inventions, manufacture, just the things that we think have made our age so glorious. One thing must stand for a whole class, and so the blacksmith or machinist naturally stands for all the mechanical arts, which were brought to a flourishing stage by this people. Notice that they not only wrought in copper, which was the first used metal, but also in iron, which implies an advanced stage.

E. There is mention made also of a daughter, Naamah. The name translated means "Delightful" or

"Pleasant." This is evidently intended to symbolize social culture, fashionable elegance, all those things that go to make up high society. This is appropriately symbolized by a woman, especially by a woman with the name "Delights."

Here then we have indicated, as in an impressionist picture, the elements which go to make up the highest state of advancement and success as they would be imagined by the people of his time. Cain and his line thus stand for efficiency which yields worldly prosperity and progress.

He has stated the situation fully and fairly. He has shown what efficiency can produce. As seen in Cain himself: 1. Family comfort. 2. Power. 3. Fame and rank. For his descendants, as seen in Lamech great sensuous luxury. As seen in his children: 1. Wealth. 2. Art. 3. Mechanical inventions. 4. Brilliant social elegance. All these efficiency could produce then, and we agree with him that it can do the same now.

V

Is efficiency then to be accepted as the one great rule for life? Here is what efficiency can secure. It is a pretty attractive picture. Most of us would be mightily attracted by it. If efficiency can do that for us let us surely adopt it for the ultimate guiding principle of life. That is just what the great mass of men are saying and doing today.

What is the answer of the author? He has stated it in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses—the little poem that seems so strange. His answer is unique and it is complete. Men have entirely missed its import, and so have passed it by as just an unintelligible scrap of ancient literary flotsam. Really it is one of the keenest bits of philosophic epigram, and the best answer ever made to the problem of success by material prosperity.

"Adah and Zillah hear my voice
Ye wives of Lamech hearken unto me

For I will slay a man for wounding me
And a young man for bruising me:

If Cain shall be avenged seven fold
Truly Lamech seventy and seven fold."

This must be his answer to the question whether efficiency is the final formula for a successful world, for this he gives as the final word of efficiency.

What does this poem mean? For my part when I read it I cannot help but see a big red rooster calling his flock of hens around him and flying up on the barnyard fence to crow. That is what it looks like. And I have no question that practically that was the meaning the author intended to convey by it. That is the answer he intended to give to the great problem. That is what efficiency and great wealth can enable a man to do.

"Adah and Zillah hear my voice
Ye wives of Lamech hearken unto me."

He does not say with the author of Ecclesiastes: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit," nor with the Psalmist: "The seed of the wicked shall be cut off." He says, on the contrary, it is not vanity. You will not be cut off but will attain success. He says to you: "You have succeeded in getting everything you went after and become as great as you hoped. But what of it! What after all have you got?" He laughs at you in ridicule, and you have not a word to answer him, because you know he is right. That is the way he gives his answer.

One wonders if he had visited some of our modern cabarets and pleasure palaces; if he had had entrée to the fêtes of the "four hundred," had spent a season in the fashionable hotels of Newport, Palm Beach and other fashionable resorts where extreme wealth goes to disport itself, and had seen the frenzied attempts it makes to think it is buying happiness.

What do the men that amass selfish great wealth get out of it? About all they can do with it is to load their women folk with jewels and glittering luxuries and organize brilliant parties and extravagant displays, just in order to crow before the rest of the barnyard.

Having disposed of this side of the question he turns to the more serious side of it. "You have become the super-man and not only you get nothing out of it for yourself except the chance to fly up on the fence and crow before your hens, but you have also become a menace and danger to the rest of the world."

The verb of the third line may be translated either "I have slain" or "I will slay," but the meaning is about the same either way.

"If any man injures me I will kill him.
 If any young upstart gets in my way let him beware."

"I am not a person to be trifled with. If any man or institution gets in the way of my success that will be the end of them." "Don't cut my prices or criticize my methods if you want to continue in your own business." "Let China, Morocco or Mexico beware how they treat our merchants and travelers whatever they do." "No World's Court or League of Nations shall ever have the right to criticize anything that we choose to do."

The last couplet shows the corroding effect upon the successful man himself.

"If Cain shall be avenged seven fold
Truly Lamech seventy and seven fold."

My ancestor Cain was seven times as great as common men and was to be avenged seven fold, but any injury to me shall be avenged seventy-seven fold. Two German missionaries are murdered in Kiaochow—about the number of persons that are murdered with impunity in some of our cities every day—but Germany is great and strong. Lamech shall be avenged seventy-seven fold. So Germany takes the whole province of Shantung for revenge.

How about ourselves? That great nation of China, four hundred million people, is in the throes of a great revolution. In the midst of the turmoil one American is killed in Nanking—not one million but just plain one. And our whole country shrieks out a demand that gunboats be sent and punitive war begun. He was an American, one of our people. A dozen Chinamen are murdered in time of peace on the "Sand Lots" at San Francisco, but that is quite a different thing. Lamech is a great man and shall be avenged seventy-seven fold.

CHAPTER V

Ecclesiasticism

I

SO much then for this second experiment. Is Efficiency the great thing that will lead to the highest life—the kind of life that God wants or that we want? The author does not give his decision directly, as he did in the first experiment, by a great disaster. He leaves the question to us. He tells us fairly and frankly what efficiency will produce. It will produce a Lamech and all that he stands for. If that is the ideal type, if that is what we want, what will bring to the world the greatest amount of happiness and good, then Efficiency is the final answer.

But I think, aside from a few disciples of Nietzsche, the unanimous verdict of men would be that such a man is not the ideal. We have not yet found that final answer. On the contrary just the insolence and menace which is the invariable product of selfish great efficiency and great wealth have always been one of the greatest curses of the world. And because the author thinks that is the verdict he drops all this line of Cain from the story entirely, goes away back and gets another man to start another story—another experiment.

> 25 And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For, *said she,* God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him. 26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enosh. Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah.

Another son is born to Eve, Seth. By a characteristic

Hebrew pun on the sound of the word, Seth—Appointed —it is proposed that he is appointed to take the place of the murdered Abel. Abel was the common man who was not efficient, and this one takes Abel's place. Efficiency has been a failure. Now he is going to try if there may be a way outside of efficiency which will lead to the good and satisfactory world that will make men happy and that God wants. So the author begins a new section headed by the word "Generations" which we find eleven times in the book, heading sections.

Are we to have another experiment, another régime by which to test out and find the way to the highest good? It would not be unnatural to think so. Moreover the expressions used at the end of this section in chapter six would seem to mean that there was a disappointment and an experiment had failed.

"My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (vs. 3).

"It repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth" (vs. 6). If we are right in our analysis that the whole book is intended to be made up of such experiments then this will be the third one of them.

What is to be the nature of this experiment? The line of Seth is designated as the line in which the experiment is to be tried. When the first son is born in that line that might be an appropriate place to indicate what the nature of the experiment in that line is to be. We have already had that indicated for us in the closing words of the last section (chap. 4:26), where the Cain efficiency experiment has failed and a new line in Seth is chosen to carry on. It is said there:

"To Seth, to him also there was born a son,
And he called his name Enosh (man)
Then began men to call on the name of Jehovah."

Now what is the meaning of this last line, "Men began to call on the name of Jehovah"? Such a peculiar and definite expression must have been used here for some purpose. Used just after the line of Cain has been dropped and another line chosen to carry on, it would seem as if it were intended to give the characteristic of that line—what they stand for. Instead of a line that was characterized by Efficiency now we are to follow a line whose characteristic was that they "called on the name of Jehovah."

There has been communication and contact with Jehovah all along, so this must be something more formal, something organized. May we not call it the régime of "organized religion"—of Ecclesiasticism? The author is going to set forth an experiment to try organized religion as the hope of the world, to see if when men call on the name of Jehovah that will not produce a perfect and successful world.

I presume most of us would have been willing to have risked our own personal fate with either of the previous two, perfect environment or great efficiency. But if they have been tried and found wanting we would say then this third is the right one. Certainly this will succeed. This is the one the author will make yield world success.

II

We may hold our judgment in suspense a little while we notice the way the author treats the subject. As in the case of Cain, he gives it time to develop. He follows down through a line of descendants, before he looks at results.

The excessively long lives ascribed to these patriarchs, which, by the way, is about the only thing most readers see in this passage, we shall discuss later (pp. 136f.). Considered as the actual ages of real persons, biologists would declare these figures impossible. But if all this passage be considered as merely a parable or picture by which the author is setting forth some lesson, and these great ages merely a device to indicate exalted rank, there is no difficulty at all. It is quite parallel to the device sometimes seen in ancient art, of depicting kings and important persons of gigantic size and slaves or captives correspondingly small. The custom of attributing very long life to great heroes was common with ancient story tellers.

5 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; 2 male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. 3 And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son* in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: 4 and the days of Adam after he begat Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters. 5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

6 And Seth lived a hundred and five years, and begat Enosh: 7 and Seth lived after he begat Enosh eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters: 8 and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.

9 And Enosh lived ninety years and begat Kenan: 10 and Enosh lived after he begat Kenan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters: 11 and all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years: and he died.

12 And Kenan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalalel: 13 and Kenan lived after he begat Mahalalel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters: 14 and all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.

15 And Mahalalel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared: 16 and Mahalalel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters: 17 and all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died.

18 And Jared lived a hundred sixty and two years, and begat Enoch: 19 and Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years,

and begat sons and daughters: 20 and all the days of Jared were
nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.

21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:
22 and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three
hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 23 and all the days of
Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: 24 and Enoch walked
with God: and he was not; for God took him.

25 And Methuselah lived a hundred eighty and seven years, and
begat Lamech: 26 and Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven
hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters: 27 and
all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years:
and he died.

28 And Lamech lived a hundred eighty and two years, and begat a
son: 29 and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort
us in our work and in the toil of our hands, *which cometh* because of
the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. 30 And Lamech lived after
he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and
daughters: 31 And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy
and seven years: and he died.

32 And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem,
Ham, and Japheth.

We will notice a large degree of identity between the names in the two lines, as though he wished to emphasize by that means that they were parallel, or were contrasted.

Cain	Kenan
Enoch	Enoch
Irad	Jared
Mehujael	Mahalelel
Methushael	Methuselah
Lamech	Lamech

In the case of Cain's line there were seven generations, in this line of Seth ten are given, as if to indicate that there was enough hope to hold on longer. Also to emphasize that same idea we note the enormous length of time covered by this era of Seth's line, apparently 1656 years. Was that an indication that the plan was working satisfactorily? At least it was not a quick failure.

Again, as in the line of Cain above, counting down to the seventh generation, the Hebrew number of perfection, to get a fully ripened result, we come to the name of Enoch. "Enoch the seventh from Adam" (Jude 14).

"Enoch walked with God
And he was not, for God took him."

This is usually taken to mean that he was so good that God took him to heaven without dying. It certainly means that he was an excellent, good man. This plan, then, could produce good men of the very highest type. This is intended to be made quite emphatic.

But Enoch was only one among many, and is not introduced as a leader or representative. His life was the shortest of all in the list. And God is represented as specially taking him away, as though the world's society was not suited to him. At the end of this line again we find a man specially designated as good. "Noah was a righteous man" (chap. 6:9). However his righteousness is distinctly referred to as exceptional. This régime could produce good men, but evidently that is not intended to be considered its characteristic feature.

We are not left merely to inferences. It is plainly stated in the most emphatic terms that the experiment was a failure. As we have already noted, Jehovah declared that it was so, that the whole race had become so corrupt that "it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth" (chap. 6:5).

"Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth
And that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart
Was only Evil continually."

All the following narrative—the story of the flood—is based on the fact that men, though "calling on the name of Jehovah," had become utterly bad.

6 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose. 3 And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years. 4 The [1]Nephilim were in the earth in those days and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them: the same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.

5 And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.

The experiment of Organized Religion, or Ecclesiasticism has also failed. Failed most disastrously.

III

Now is not that a strange idea? Could it be the intention of the author thus to say that organized religion ended in disaster? If so is he not mistaken? We must examine further the rest of his picture.

There is that curious passage (chap. 6:1-4) about "the Sons of God" marrying "the daughters of men." We need not necessarily think that the author really believed that there were such divine beings walking around on the earth and doing things. He uses that idea here, but he uses it as a symbol or parable, to denote some natural sociological fact.

He mentions these marriages of the sons of God with daughters of men in connection with the great wickedness of the world, as if it was the cause of the wickedness or part of it.

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[1] Or, *giants*. See Num. 13:33.

We cannot help but notice that a strong repugnance to a marriage with a different race is seen already in the case of both Isaac (chap. 24:2 ff), and Jacob (chap. 27:46). Later we see how the marriage of Solomon with gentile women was considered a great cause of corruption in his day (I Kings 11:1-8). In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah it was one of the evils against which they took the most drastic measures (Ezra 9:10 and Neh. 13:23-29). We can easily imagine a reason for the author using this as a type of the evil causes that were ruining the world.

Still, while this may explain how the author came to use such a thing to symbolize the cause of the corruption, yet I think we must feel that he is using it merely as a symbol, and the whole scene has practically the force of a metaphor or parable. He means that something which such marriages would symbolize corrupted the world.

As we have noted then, the author says that this régime of Organized Religion was a failure, that under it the world got utterly corrupt and filled with violence. Is he not mistaken here? Is he not making a false charge? Is he not speaking evil of the best thing the world has ever had?

A candid study of history will show that he is not mistaken, he is right. For proof we do not have to go to the heathen religions and the evils and cruelties which have been caused there by organized religion. We will take our own religion, Christianity. It very early became an organized religion. It was also quite early freed from all obstacles and persecutions and given a chance for untrammeled development. And what was the result?

In much less than this 1656 years it became so shamelessly corrupt, and the whole Christian world of the Middle Ages so filled with violence and all kinds of evils, that the words of our author here might well be applied to the world then.

And the striking thing is the fact that just what the author gives as the cause of the corruption here was the cause of the debauchery of the church of the Middle Ages.

"The sons of God married the daughters of men."

The leaders of religion married the pleasures of the world—pomp, power, riches. The lords of the church rivaled the kings and princes in magnificence and luxury, and also in cruelty and crime. He could hardly have chosen a better term to describe just the corruption and debauchery that then took place, and to describe the main cause that brought it about. "The sons of God married the daughters of men."

What was true of the church and church officers was also true of the monasteries and the organized religious orders. Started usually with great earnestness, "calling on the name of Jehovah," they all soon became prosperous, powerful, wealthy and debased.

There were Enochs and Noahs in the corrupt church too—many earnest, humble, pious individuals all through those dark ages. And in this case God later had a way to redeem that corrupt church and restore a degree of honesty and purity again without sending another deluge. So we need not quite despair, though perhaps even we would do well to beware.

"There were giants in the earth in those days."

And there were giants in these days, too, when the sons of the church married the pleasures of the world. Some even of the most corrupt ecclesiastics were "men of renown," political giants, handling kings and kingdoms like pawns on the chess board of European statecraft. It was all just as the picture here represents it.

Not that this author was pretending to prophesy the events that would take place thus in this far distant future time. What was true then has always been true when organized ecclesiasticism has got into unhampered control. It was true in Egypt. It was true in India, in Babylon, in Persia. The temptation is too great, the daughters of men—the powers and pleasures of the world—too alluring, and organized religion falls and becomes corrupt.

The author then has drawn his picture true to life, and the régime of Organized Religion, though the best and most hopeful so far conceived, and though producing some Enochs of pre-eminent virtue, is not yet the answer to the problem—the way that will lead to the perfect life.

CHAPTER VI

Punishment

I

IF this has failed what next? This is the third time. "Three times and out." In our common proverbs, after three failures we would count the case hopeless. We would not be surprised then, if another experiment is to be tried, that it should be punishment and retribution.

Punishment has always been the favorite prescription for reforming men and making them better. Indeed for reforming criminals, until recently it has been about the only expedient the world has thought of using. We have our jails and penitentiaries, and practically the only method our legislatures use to curb evil is to pass laws to punish it. Even religion, until recently, has had the same spirit and put its chief reliance for reforming men on the terrors of Hell.

Well, that is the next plan the author proposes to have God try. And it shall be tried in the most drastic possible form. The whole world had become corrupt, and the whole world shall be punished. If punishment is able to deter men from sin and make them lead righteous lives it ought to be successful here, for there is to be tried the extreme that punishment can do. The whole wicked world shall be destroyed by a flood, and only righteous Noah and his seed left to people the world of the future.

That the author intended this for another of his experiments is confirmed by the same evidence as in the last case. When we turn to the record of its close we see Jehovah himself accounting it so, and saying that as an experiment it was not a success—not a plan to be followed. Again and again he states emphatically that he will not try it any more. "Neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth" (chap. 9:11). "The waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (vs. 15). "The imagination of man's heart is only evil from his youth" (chap. 8:21), so he never can be brought to righteous living by this method.

Though this is to be a story of judgment and destruction, the author will not let us lose sight of the fact that Jehovah is a God of mercy and ready to save. He anticipates here one of Jesus' parables of grace. In Jesus' parable a certain man had a fig tree that bore no fruit for three years—just as there have been three disappointments here. He told the gardener to cut it down as useless, but the gardener pleads for another chance. "Let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it and dung it, and then if it shall bear fruit well" (Luke 13:6-9).

So here, while there have been also three experiments tried that failed, and God says "My Spirit shall not strive with men forever," he is still merciful and grants another long term of grace.

"Yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The execution of the decree to cut down the fruitless fig tree—to destroy the corrupt world—shall be delayed one hundred and twenty years. All that long time, the apostle Peter reminds us (I Pet. 3:20), "The long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing," and while Noah, "A preacher of righteousness" (II Pet. 2:5), apparently went about trying to persuade men to come and accept the offered salvation of the ark.

Perhaps we should notice the rather striking expression used here:

> "It repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth
> And it grieved him at his heart."

Does God change his mind? Does he make mistakes that he afterward regrets? If this expression occurred in a work on systematic theology it might arouse criticism. But this phrase here is not given for a doctrinal description of God but for a vivid picture of the badness of men's acts and their offensiveness to God.

The expression here should be judged in connection with analogous expressions all through the Bible where terms appropriate to man are applied to God—God's hand, his arm, his face, his feet; God sitting, walking, riding, smiting with a sword. The only way that God could be pictured so that men would think of him as a person is by the use of such human terms with regard to him. We do it now constantly. Just so the only way men could vividly express God's feeling of the good or bad character of any act was by representing him as having the feeling which that act would produce in man—pleased, angry, grieved, repenting, and the like.

It does not mean that we can enter into the psychology of God and know what his actual feelings are. It is merely the common and accepted manner of metaphorical speech. This note must be taken as applying to all the other cases in the book where analogous expressions occur.

While the author is giving a series of sociological experiments all alike applying to the same problem of how to get the best world state, he treats each successive experiment by a different method. The plan of perfect environment he dismissed by analyzing the temptation and sin that wrecked it. For the plan of Efficiency he painted its results in the brightest possible colors and then showed that even so they are at best only vanity and at worst anarchy. For the plan of Ecclesiasticism he thinks it sufficient to say that it degenerated into corruption and ruin.

This next movement, which is to consist of a great punishment that shall sweep the world clean, he cannot present in any of these ways, so his plan is to picture the event itself in the most dramatic and spectacular manner. Few authors have ever succeeded in making a great calamity stand out so magnificent and impressive.

It is usual for critics to take pains to show how this narrative is woven together from two previous narratives, and how well it illustrates the theory that there were such two or more previous treatises combined together to make the Old Testament books. The frequent repetitions in the text are referred to that source.

But such repetitions and parallelism are the very genius of Hebrew literary art, and it is quite immaterial for us whether the author got them here from that source or whether they are his own intentional work.

We may or may not know where an author gets his ideas or his items. That is every author's problem. We do know that this author has made a matchless product, whether it be a mosaic or a single original painting. And it is hard to see where a single item or sentence could be left out without lessening the effect.

In its style and movement the story almost gives us the feeling of a great anthem or oratorio. We may have occasion to use that fancy in our study of it.

II

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, *and* perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. 15 And this is how thou shalt make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16 A light shalt thou make to the ark, and to a cubit shalt thou finish it upward; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. 17 And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is in the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds after their kind, and of the cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. 21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. 22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

The story proper occupies a new section beginning at chapter 6:9, with the words:

"These are the generations of Noah."

This section is to give in detail the story of the flood but he had already introduced the subject in the last section. He announced the coming of some great calamity for the punishment of the terrible evil that was there recounted. First in chapter 6:3 he merely hinted that something was coming.

"My Spirit shall not strive with man forever
. . . . . .
Yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."

A great judgment of some kind is coming sometime in the future. Farther down in the seventh verse he comes out plainly and Jehovah declares:

"I will destroy man whom I have created
from the face of the ground
Both man and beast and creeping things
and birds of the heavens."

Only one man is to be excepted from the general destruction.

"Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah."

All this is the prologue or introduction to the great tragedy. From verse 9 in the new section he definitely takes up the narrative. He first brings his characters onto the stage.

"Noah was a righteous man
And perfect in his generation.
Noah walked with God."

Alongside of Noah are placed his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, for it is not merely the saving of a good man but rather the repeopling of the earth by his posterity that will be the final thought.

Then on the other hand, he shows the world, utterly corrupt. He uses the familiar method of Hebrew poetry, a parallel or repeated statement, in fact he used a double repetition.

"The earth was corrupt before God
And the earth was filled with violence.
God saw the earth and behold it was corrupt
For all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

With the actors thus introduced, he begins at the thirteenth verse to give a plain, quiet descriptive account.

God comes to Noah and tells him that he is going to destroy all the people in the world because they are so wicked. He tells him to build a great ship or ark, giving him directions how to make it. The world is to be destroyed by a flood of water, and God promises to save him and his family by the ship he is to build.

He tells him to bring all kinds of animals into the ship, with food for them, to keep them alive, and to bring them by mated pairs to propagate their kind after the flood is over. And Noah did all this as he was told.

Thus we have the story laid out, with what is proposed to be done, all in plain, concise, unemotional form. If we imagine it as an oratorio the music will begin in moderate, quiet tone, to rise later in a gradual crescendo as the calamity develops.

III

With chapter seven the action definitely begins. The long years of preparation are over and the time has come.

7 And Jehovah said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, the male and his female; and of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female: 3 of the birds also of the heavens, seven and seven, male and female, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. 4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the ground. 5 And Noah did according unto all that Jehovah commanded him.

6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. 7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. 8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creepeth upon the ground, 9 there went

in two and two unto Noah into the ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah. 10 And it came to pass after the seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; 14 they, and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. 15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh wherein is the breath of life. 16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God commanded him: and Jehovah shut him in. 17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth. 18 And the waters prevailed, and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. 19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. 20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. 21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both birds, and cattle, and beasts, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth and every man: 22 all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was on the dry land, died. 23 And every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark. 24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

God calls to Noah and directs him to enter the ark.

> "Come thou and all thy household into the ark."

He tells him to bring all the animals in with him. Before, in chapter 6:19, 20, when he is merely outlining the plan it is sufficient to say that the animals were to be taken in pairs for propagation, but now when we are supposed to visualize them actually coming to the ark it is time to notice that of the clean beasts—more useful for food and sacrifice at the close—there were seven pairs taken. Thus the action begins, and we see them all slowly and solemnly marching up to the ark of safety.

The author appreciated the value of suspense to intensify emotion, and so when they are all called to the ark they have to wait there seven days before the flood actually comes—seven long days facing the great calamity, with the hour of doom steadily and remorselessly growing nearer and nearer. Again the repeated statement:

"Noah did according to all that Jehovah commanded."

With the sixth verse the actual account of the coming of the flood begins. We are right at the event, so everything must be precise and definite. We visualize Noah, an old man six hundred years old. His sons, his wife, his sons' wives all must be mentioned. Again also all the beasts and birds, clean and unclean, all by mated pairs just as God commanded, must be mentioned. Then when the seven days of waiting are over the flood of waters actually begins. It is still a calm, descriptive statement of the fact just as a fact to be narrated.

But such a tremendous event should have a more emotional treatment. So the passage is repeated, this time fortissimo, with all the orchestra clashing at once. The precise date is given, even more definitely than before. "The six hundredth year of Noah's life, the second month and the seventeenth day of the month." The hour has struck, and now with crash and roar the full calamity comes.

"All the fountains of the great deep were broken up
The windows of heaven were opened
And the rain was upon the earth
Forty days and forty nights."

The Hebrews thought the dry earth was but a thin crust resting on limitless water below, and a crystal dome of sky held up an equally limitless waste of water above. Now everything breaks loose. The windows in the dome are opened letting the floods pour through. The waters below break through and surge up everywhere overwhelming all, while torrents of rain fell day and night without stop. Forty days and forty nights the terrible tempest and flood continued without remission and without pause.

When this first great crash of the climax is over the music may moderate down for more quiet and sustained description. From verse 13 on he gives again a recapitulation of all. Then with another crescendo he carries on, as the movement develops, till the desolation has reached its height.

All the family go into the ark, and the beasts and birds and cattle of every sort, all in mated pairs as God commanded. "And Jehovah shut them in." Now they are all in the ark, and he visualizes the scene from without. For forty days the flood rages. The story is told without so much clash and sound, and yet as we thus calmly view it we feel the calamity steadily increase in depth of meaning as it moves on to another still greater climax.

As the storm rages and the torrents of rain pour down, first you see the pools of water forming and soon spreading everywhere. In time the waters have increased so much that "they bear up the ark." More and more they increase till it is "lifted up above the earth."

Still more and more "The waters prevailed and increased greatly." Again still more and more till the great ark is fairly floating about "on the face of the waters." Then he uses emphatic terms. "The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth." On and on they rose till "All the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered."

Just what the next clause means is not so plain, but since the height of the ark was thirty cubits and it might be supposed to be submerged to half its depth it may mean to indicate that there was a fifteen cubit clearance over the highest mountains so that the ark floated about everywhere without danger of touching ground.

Now he turns to picture the results of the calamity—

"All flesh died."

And he rings the changes, and piles words upon words to tell the absolute and universal destruction of men and beasts and every living thing on the face of the earth.

Then he turns back again to that lonely ark floating in the vast boundless waters, with only Noah and his family, all that was left of all the people of the whole earth. Day after day they floated there alone in the vast waste of waters, over a drowned world—one hundred and fifty days. One hundred and fifty days only the limitless waste of waters to be seen everywhere, and the little ark with its little company, the last remnant of a drowned world floating there alone.

It is hardly necessary to spend time on the numbers used here, forty and one hundred and fifty (chap. 7:12 and 24). Both are conventional numbers that might be used to mean just an indefinite many. Forty is constantly so used in Hebrew and one hundred and fifty might just mean more than a hundred, one hundred and half as much more. No writer deliberately putting in so plainly and obviously different numbers would mean them to refer to the same things. Wherever he got the numbers, even if he got them from two different manuscripts and whatever their original use, he himself if he put them in at all would certainly intend that they should be considered to refer to different things. A man who could write such a masterpiece as this book of Genesis must be credited with having at least as much common sense as we who so blunderingly try to interpret it.

The meaning that one would most obviously take would be that the roar and storm of the flooding continued forty days—it is specified "day and night," as if to impress us with the terror. But there would naturally be a long while after the raging of the tempest ceased before such an enormous flood would subside and signs of the earth again appear. One hundred and fifty days in all the lonely ark floated there in that vast watery waste—one hundred and fifty long and dreary days that little company watched and waited inside before any sign of promise or deliverance appeared.

IV

Now comes the third and last movement. The music now may be quiet but sustained, with strain after strain shading away by successive cadences to a peaceful close. The terror is over, and now we can face toward the dawning of hope.

8 And God remembered Noah, and all the beasts, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; 2 the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; 3 and the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. 4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. 5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened

the window of the ark which he had made: 7 and he sent forth a raven, and it went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. 8 And he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; 9 but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him to the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: and he put forth his hand, and took her, and brought her in unto him into the ark. 10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; 11 and the dove came in to him at eventide; and, lo, in her mouth an olive-leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. 12 And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she returned not again unto him any more.

13 And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dried. 14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dry. 15 And God spake unto Noah, saying, 16 Go forth from the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. 17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh, both birds, and cattle, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. 18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: 19 every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, whatsoever moveth upon the earth, after their families, went forth out of the ark.

Dreadful have been the dark days of destruction, but God has been present watching and controlling everything. And when the time has come he turns his attention again to the little group of anxious refugees in the ark.

With artistic skill the author introduces a little touch of nature here. Who has not often seen, after the long, dreary, all-day rain, toward evening a little breeze spring up, the mists and clouds blown away, the sun come out with all fair again.

"God made a wind to pass over the earth
And the waters assuaged."

This marks the beginning of the rescue. From this time on we are moving toward the day of deliverance and the new world. But it was to take a long weary while. The storm and flooding had ceased, but only at the end of one hundred and fifty days had the waters decreased enough so that the bottom of the ark touched ground on the top of one of the mountains of Ararat.

The one hundred and fifty might be only a conventional expression for "many," yet it would rather seem here to be intended for an actual number. One hundred and fifty days would be just five months of thirty days each, and we know that at least the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians used a standard month of thirty days. It would be just five months, one hundred and fifty days, from the second month seventeenth day, when the flood started, to the seventh month seventeenth day that the ark grounded on the summit of Ararat.

The rest of the account seems a little strange at first—the long, incomprehensible delay from the time the ark grounded till the time when they were able to come out. But we will have to recognize that the artist author is here also quite correct. It takes but a short time for a calamity to strike but a very long while for the restoration, a short time for sickness to lay us low but a much longer time to recover. Someone said of the great war that though peace could be easily declared yet it would take forty years to wind up all the barbed wire. So here we know that the peaceful end is approaching but the closing strains of the music are repeated over and over again before the last final chords are struck.

The ark grounded on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, and they could see that the waters were constantly going down, perhaps by the height of the water on the sides of the ark. But it was not till the first day of the tenth month—more than two long months of waiting—that they began to see the tops of the mountains appearing out of the waters.

Again there is a long wait—forty days. The patience of the waiting group is beginning to be strained. Will the time of deliverance never come? Noah must do something to make a trial and relieve the tension. He brings a raven to the window and lets it fly out into the open air. Just what he expected is not plain, but the carrion feeding raven found plenty to satisfy its needs in the debris of a drowned world, and the watchers waited in vain for its return.

A gentler bird will be a better test, so a dove is sent out. But it finds no suitable place to stay, and soon came flying back to the window and was taken in again. Seven days they wait again. The dove is sent out once more. All day it flew about. In the evening it came back, but in its mouth was a fresh olive leaf it had found somewhere as proof that the earth was beginning to live again. Seven days more they wait. The dove is sent out and comes back no more again. Now there is joy in the little group. The earth is restored, and soon they may go out to their old life again.

But not yet! Not yet! If we add the figures together, forty days plus three waits of seven days makes only about two months. From the last date given, the tenth month first day, that would only bring us to the twelfth month. So after all that they still had to wait all of another month till the next note of time in verse thirteen:

> "The six hundred and first year, first month,
> First day of the month."

It was now New Year's Day. Must they wait forever? Something must be done.

"Noah removed the covering of the ark."

No need for it any longer. Everywhere he looked he saw nothing but dry ground. But this was up in the highlands, and it would be some time still before the plains would be dry. Not yet! Not yet! Still another long month and twenty-seven days they had to wait till—

"In the second month the twenty seventh day
of the month
The earth was dry."

And at last God said "Go forth." One whole year and ten days they had been shut up in the ark. It was seven months and ten days after the ark had grounded, and nearly two months since Noah's eyes had seemed to see the earth all dry. The course of full recovery is always slow. Better beware of getting into trouble and needing to have rescue.

V

20 And Noah builded an altar unto Jehovah, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. 21 And Jehovah smelled the sweet savor; and Jehovah said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. 22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

The flood is over and all have come forth from the ark. Very appropriately, the first thing Noah does is to offer a sacrifice to God. The story says:

"He took of every clean beast and every clean bird."

It was apparently a great ceremony with many offerings. The large number of clean animals taken in the ark was apparently with some reference to this sacrifice. The words, "Jehovah smelled the sweet savor,"

are just a physical way of expressing the thought that Jehovah approved and accepted his act.

Among the ancient tablets found in the ruins of the library at Nineveh are several relating to the creation and the deluge. In one of them there are some very striking resemblances to parts of this story of the flood. As the hero of that story nears the end of his stay in the ship he sends out a dove that comes back. Then he sends out a sparrow that also comes back, and last a raven that does not come back. Then he disembarks and offers a great sacrifice on the top of the mountain. The poem goes on to say:

"The gods smelled the savor
The gods smelled the sweet savor
The gods above the sacrifice collected like flies."

This all seems very similar to our account here, even the expression that "the gods smelled the sweet savor." But any such conception of gods like a swarm of flies buzzing around the meat on the altars seems to us exceedingly crude and ridiculous. It illustrates the vast difference between our author's conception of God and that of the other people of his time. For that is one of the famous poems of one of the greatest nations of antiquity.

The same difference is also seen there in the next part of the same poem, where the gods get into a quarrel among themselves over the saving of the hero from the flood.

The simple reading of this verse twenty one would seem to imply that Jehovah was so pleased with Noah's sacrifice that he promised to never send another flood.

"Jehovah smelled the sweet savor
And Jehovah said in his heart
I will not again curse the ground any
more for man's sake."

I see no reason to question that the author may have really intended to give that impression. He makes it clear that it must not be considered a mere whim. Further on a whole long paragraph is devoted to showing that it was a matured purpose of the first importance. But even so, here as elsewhere the author plainly means to give the impression that God's acts, even though they are the result of his wise counsel, still have close relation to the prayers and devotion of men. It is too big a theological problem to discuss here further than to say that Jesus also certainly said that this would be so (cf. John 15:7, etc.).

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. 11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. 12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. 14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, 15 and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. 17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

"For the imagination of man's heart
Is evil from his youth."

When God declares that he will never send another flood he is virtually declaring that the flood was a failure as a remedial, reforming agency. The reason he gives shows that to be so. The reason he will not send another flood is not because this one has been sufficient and men will have learned their lesson, but rather because they will not learn any lesson from it and it will not do any good. Men are so prone to evil that punishment will never keep them from it.

This really then stamps all this deluge experience as another experiment that is rejected. Any further plan he has for the reformation and uplift of men must have kindness as one of its elements, for he pledges himself that nothing shall ever hereafter interrupt his continued and practical kindness to them.

> "While the earth remaineth seed time and harvest
> Cold and heat, summer and winter
> And day and night, shall not fail."

So even this terrible flood narrative, so commonly claimed to picture Jehovah as a hard and jealous despot, in the end really pictures him as a God of mercy, to whom men may reasonably look for sympathy and salvation.

In chapter 9:8-17, he goes so far as to put that purpose into a formal covenant. He thus takes pains to emphasize the fact that retribution and punishment are not the way to redeem the world.

It is interesting to notice that God includes all the animals also with man in making this covenant, thus keeping up the impression that we have already noticed several times before, that men and animals are to be considered fundamentally as in the same class.

The ancient method of confirming a bargain was not by "signing on the dotted line," but by the use of some kind of token or witness. The witness might be something given from one to the other, or it might be merely some object in the presence of which the promise was made, and which both would designate to thereafter remind them of the promise. So verse thirteen here does not mean that this was the first time a rainbow had ever been seen, but merely that both of the parties, looking at the rainbow perhaps, took it to be the reminder to both of them that the promise had been made.

There is significance in the character of the object which God chose to be the reminder or witness. There are few things in nature considered more beautiful than the rainbow, and God wanted that to be a reminder of the kindness of his feelings. And as the rainbow is seen against a background of black clouds, that too would suggest safety when evils were most threatening.

VI

9 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens; with all wherewith the ground teemeth, and all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered. 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; as the green herb have I given you all. 4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. 5 And surely your blood, *the blood* of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it: and at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. 7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

In chapter 9:1-7, we have a rather peculiar interlude in the story. The usual interpretation is that it represents God as now for the first time suggesting or permitting to man the use of animal food. At the time of the creation man was restricted to vegetables for food, but now God enlarges and allows him to eat meat.

We have already seen that no such construction can properly be put on the words in the Creation narrative, and we will be prepared to expect that something else than that must have been the meaning here.

It is hard to conceive how anyone could have imagined that there was a time when men did not eat meat. As far as history and tradition go, the more primitive the state the more they depended on hunting and animal food. Even if we consider it a myth, how could such a myth or such a folk tale have been formed? When was there a time when men could have made such a myth?

But more than that, how can we account for God making such an order now or for the author putting such an order as that into his story at such a juncture as this. The author must have had some little sense of propriety. Here he has been telling of the most majestic, spectacular and awful event that has ever been known. A whole earth devastated and all the human race destroyed in a great cataclysm. And right in the midst of the account he interrupts to tell what kind of things men may have on their tables to eat.

Suppose someone were giving an account of the Tokyo earthquake or the great Mississippi floods, and telling of the terrible scenes of suffering and desolation that were seen there, and he should stop right in the midst of his descriptions to put in a recipe telling how to make soap. We would think the man was crazy. But no crazier than, in the midst of this narrative of the most stupendous and awful event of all history to interrupt and insert a direction as to what people should be allowed to eat for dinner.

However, it would not be crazy but seem quite sane and reasonable if we found that it was not a recipe for making soap but an account of the disinfecting devices they were using in the devastated region to guard against the fevers and plague that are always apt to follow such great disasters. That would be quite appropriate there. And just so here we shall be quite ready to find that we have been entirely mistaking the meaning of this passage, and it is really something quite suitable and appropriate for such a great occasion.

It is not a new regulation about what they could eat. That is not at all the meaning. The real heart of the meaning of the passage is in the fifth and sixth verses. It is all a warning against murder. All the rest of the passage is but auxiliary to that.

It was murder that brought on the flood. The record is that "The earth was filled with violence" (chap. 6:10). Other crimes with it, of course, but murder was the worst and typical crime. God has just said that he will never send the punishment of another flood. But he does not wish to condone the crimes and violence which had brought on the flood. So he takes this occasion, by a solemn warning, to try to keep men from those crimes. "Beware of murder. It is the crime that destroyed your world."

That is the one message of the whole passage, and the verses that go before are to throw safeguards around human life and make it seem precious. Blood has always been considered the special type of Life. "Make blood sacred," he says. If blood is treated familiarly it will be easier for you to shed human blood. Let there be a "taboo" on all blood (cf. Lev. 17:10-14). You kill animals and eat them for food, of course, but do not let that get you so used to blood that you will feel it easy to shed human blood. Even when you kill animals for food have a horror of the blood, pour it out, do not eat it.

"But flesh with the life thereof
Which is the blood thereof
Shall ye not eat."

Not a new provision but, on the contrary, just referring them to the universal practice.

"As the green herb have I given you all things."

The perfect tense of the verb is properly used here with its normal meaning. All living creatures are yours to use. "Into your hand are they delivered," as was said on the day of creation (chap. 1:25, 28). But treat as a sacred thing the blood of even those animals you eat, in order to set a safeguard against "Your blood, the blood of your lives." For I will require that at the hand of every man, of every man's brother, and even of every beast.

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood
By man shall his blood be shed."

This is a command and a warning that is perfectly appropriate and called for just in this place. It would have seemed almost a reflection on God if he had not made it, if he had let all the terror of the flood go by and pledged against its repetition and not taken any steps to curb or decrease the violence and crime that had brought it on.

VII

18 And the sons of Noah, that went forth from the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. 19 These three were the sons of Noah: and of these was the whole earth overspread.

20 And Noah began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard: 21 and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the naked-

ness of his father, and told his two brethren without. 23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. 24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done unto him. 25 And he said,

Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

26 And he said,
Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.
27 God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.

28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. 29 And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.

There is one more incident before this section is brought to its close. It concerns Noah, and is not a very pleasant one.

Noah gets drunk and lies shamefully exposed in his tent. His youngest son discovers him and has no other thought but to go out and make sport of the shame of his father. The two other sons have just the opposite feeling, and try to cover him up and protect him from disgrace. When the patriarch wakens and knows what has been done, the older sons are blessed and the youngest son merits only a curse.

This seems rather a strange incident to be dragged in here. What is its purpose? Of course it is intended in the first place to register praise for the kind of filial honor and delicate consideration displayed by the older brothers, and contempt for such actions as those of Ham. In the second place, as Ham is always identified in Hebrew thought with Canaan, which to the Jews was their natural enemy and subject of hate, this incident may have been introduced in justification of that feeling.

It is possible the author had another thought in mind. His plan in the whole book is to give a number of experiments or enterprises that failed because they were not right, and then an enterprise or series of enterprises that were successful because, as we shall see later, they were personally conducted by God. He naturally wishes to maintain a strong contrast between the two.

In these first experiments, then, which stood for failure, it would not do to have any of them end up too happily. And so in this flood incident, the same caution must be used. God himself, indeed, declared it was a failure and was not the way to secure good men. And it adds to the sense of failure that even Noah, who originally was so good that God chose him for safety out of the whole world, yet in the end falls into deep disgrace. Noah had not yet entered into the formal relation of trust in God's conducting care which is to be the condition for the later experiments that succeeded, so even the record of Noah's career ends up in an incident of failure and shame.

CHAPTER VII

Nationalism

I

10 Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, *namely,* of Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.

2 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 3 And the sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. 4 And the sons of Javan: Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 5 Of these were the isles of the nations divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

6 And the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mizraim, and Put, and Canaan. 7 And the sons of Cush: Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah: Sheba, and Dedan. 8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before Jehovah: wherefore it is said, Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Jehovah. 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 Out of that land he went forth into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city). 13 And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, 14 and Pathrusim, and Casluhim (whence went forth the Philistines), and Caphtorim, etc.

. . . .

32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

With the tenth chapter we enter another of the author's divisions beginning with the words:

"These are the generations."

Here, according to our theory, we would expect to find the fifth of the author's experiments or régimes that failed. Is it here? and if so what is it?

This tenth chapter has been one of the surprises of the

Bible. It was long looked upon as for the most part just a list of meaningless names, put together to record genealogies in which we have no possible interest.

A very interesting light was thrown on it all a while ago by the discovery that what is given as genealogical descent of father and son in the list is really the geographical distribution and contiguity of the main nations of the world in ancient times. These names are names of nations and countries rather than of individual men. This chapter has now come to be looked on as a most valuable and interesting ethnological chart of the ancient world.

If that is the meaning of this list of names perhaps we can see its place in the author's thought, and see also that it had something to do with what the author was going to propose as another means of world perfecting—one that was to be rejected.

It is not difficult to see what the thought in his mind might be. He is telling here how the people of the world were divided up into nations and kingdoms and national organizations. That is the expedient that he is now going to exploit as a means for world success. A strong nation—the protecting power of strong national organization—that is the most important thing, the hope of the world.

Has he not now at last struck the true solution? It looks very much as though the world thought so. The whole history of the world as we read it in our books is largely just the history of struggles for national power, nations struggling to become strong and great. That is what the millions of lives sacrificed in war have been sacrificed for. Is this then the true recipe for the world's highest good?

Here again the author treats the problem by a new and different method. By this list he first outlined how it was really tried on the largest scale and the whole world filled with groups striving for national solidarity and power. He intimates that they could sometimes be successful in securing great and powerful national bodies, and that great men could use these national movements, and combine and build them into organizations of enormous power and influence.

He gives a typical example of this by a reference to what was probably the greatest national power in the world at his time, in the Assyrian and Babylonian region. He tells of some great one whom he calls Nimrod, who consolidated his power in the Babylonian region, and went on to build up the enormous power that was centered in Assyria and Nineveh. Archæologists do tell us now that the culture of ancient Assyria came from Babylon. This is a grateful testimony to his story here but not essential. The lesson would be the same if it were all fiction.

All this is merely a sort of prelude or introduction to the problem he has in mind, and to which he intends to give an answer. Is centralization and strong national power the highest good, the road to world prosperity and happiness?

II

11 And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed [1]east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And Jehovah said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all

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[1] Or, *in the east.*

one language; and this is what they begin to do: and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. 7 Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because Jehovah did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did Jehovah scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

It is in this eleventh chapter that he gives his answer to the problem. I believe we will feel that the story reads more like a parable than an incident from real history. In any case it is practically in that use that we would look for its meaning. The story does not answer the problem by showing that the method succeeded or failed, but by having God himself declare whether he considered it a desirable method.

He pictures the beginning of nationalism—a time before the idea of strong national governments had arisen. The people of the world, in feeling about for the best way to live, found a great plain that was sufficient to support them all, and settled down to live there. They built a city, which was the first step towards centralization. They developed arts and were increasing in organization and power.

This all seemed good to them, and they determined to "go the limit." They would develop national solidarity and power as far as was possible. They would establish a center that would perfect and perpetuate their solidarity. This was typified by the idea that the tower they began to build should reach to heaven, as though they would have the power of heaven itself by that means at their disposal. The Ziggurats or tall tower-temples that the Babylonians used to build in their cities doubtless suggested to him this part of the symbolism, but the tower here was intended to be to the people not a temple but a sign or rallying point of invincible strength.

Now they were attempting to do in the fullest possible degree just what this problem calls for. They were attempting to secure the very strongest kind of national solidarity. It would be national power unlimited and unrestricted. His problem is, would such unlimited national strength and power be a good thing?

A mistaken criticism might be imagined, that our author here is condemning the "internationalism" or fraternal union of all the nations, which is now being urged as the great ideal. But that question had not then yet arisen. He could not possibly have had anything of that kind in mind to condemn it. What he has in mind is an excessive national strength that could be abused. He could get that idea from such great centralizations of power as were known in ancient times—Babylon, Egypt, Assyria. What he knew, and therefore what he meant, was not many nations uniting in an international court with international law for the settlement of disputes, but one nation becoming so strong that it could dominate everything (or that it would be beyond the reach of criticism by its neighbors, as our nation aspires to be).

His brief reference to Babylon and Assyria in the tenth chapter would seem to indicate that the peril of great power seen there was what he had on his mind, and, if so, this might possibly furnish some hint of the date at which he was writing.

For his solution, the author has Jehovah himself give the answer whether this specially great national strength was a good thing or not. Jehovah comes down to see what they are doing. He sees it all and decides that it is not a good thing, for he determines to stop it, and does stop it.

So that is his answer to the problem. The hoped for happiness and supreme good for man is not to be attained by great national power and prosperity. The best world is not to be attained by the unrestricted dominance of one national power in the world. Had his answer been accepted as final we might have been spared all the horror and cost of the great war.

It is interesting to note the way in which Jehovah broke up this universal solidarity. He just made the people so that they could not understand one another, and they spontaneously broke up into antagonistic groups that separated and went off each by itself.

That is what broke up the people into nations then, and what has kept them separate all through the centuries to be a check on one another and to prevent the great dangerous combinations and centralizations which then were the threatening peril. And so today when conditions are reversed and we wish to bring them together again and bring about fraternal, federal comity and internationalism, the way to effect it is to simply reverse the process and by breaking up misunderstandings get people everywhere to thoroughly understand other people and their viewpoints; by the universal diffusion of knowledge and by frequent commissions, conferences and meetings for international council, bring about that all nations and peoples shall come to thoroughly know and understand one another.

That then was the way they were separated, and God by so separating them was recording his decision that such great centralization of power was not a good thing. This fifth experiment has also failed. We have not yet found the road to the highest good, the ideal formula of life for man.

III

There is a very peculiar expression in chapter 10:25. Speaking of Peleg, one of the two sons of Eber, it says:

"For in his days was the earth divided."

Various interpretations have been proposed for this. One thought is that it refers to the dispersion at the tower of Babel. A curious suggestion based on the similarity of the word Peleg to the word for Canal, is that it refers to the introduction of irrigating canals in Babylon.

Another suggestion is that it refers to a division or separation between the two divisions of the Semites—the southern or Arabian tribes separating from the northern tribe from which Abraham was descended. If that is the meaning we may notice another further peculiarity or hint. In this list of genealogies in the tenth chapter no descendants of Peleg are listed, only the descendants of the other son, Joktan. But in the eleventh chapter where a special table of descendants from Shem is given, only descendants through Peleg are given.

There is a crucial division here in the line of descent. The rest of Shem's descendants through Joktan are included in the *general world* that is to be dropped out of the narrative, while those under Peleg are reserved for this list leading to Terah and Abraham, the line which is to be continued. That seems to stamp this date and this family as pivotal in the narrative. There is where the line from which Abraham descended, first began to develop as a special group. Some such meaning seems plausibly to be suggested by the omission of Peleg's descendants from the first table of genealogy. And so that may give some confirmation of this meaning of the peculiar phrase, "The earth was divided."

Taking all this together it would seem as if the author certainly intended this as a date of capital importance, presumably the date at which the specific race began which was to contain Abraham and his descendants. If this was the point at which that race was considered to begin it might aptly be called the "Hebrew" race, taking its name from the father Eber who remained with that division at the time of the separation. This would account for the early reference to "Abram the Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13) and the early designation of Joseph as a Hebrew from the land of the Hebrews, by the people in Egypt (chap. 39:14, 17 and 40:15). Later the name was specialized to the Israelites, the most prominent member of the group, and that has become the usual later use of the word Hebrew.

It is probably the more usual explanation of the name today to make it a descriptive term meaning one from "beyond the River." But that meaning seems slightly forced. Even if Abraham is considered an immigrant, Ur is on this side of the river, not beyond, and Haran is designated as the country "between the two rivers." Neither are "beyond the river." So it would be a great deal more natural if it were found allowable to refer it thus just to the ancestor Eber.

V

Chapter 11:10 begins a new section with the words:

"These are the generations of Shem."

It is very short and purely genealogy, carrying the line of Shem down to Terah and his son Abram. The length of the lives of these patriarchs is given, as is done in the line of those before the flood.

> 10 These are the generations of Shem. Shem was a hundred years old, and he begat Arpachshad two years after the flood: 11 and Shem

lived after he begat Arpachshad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

12 And Arpachshad lived five and thirty years, and begat Shelah: 13 and Arpachshad lived after he begat Shelah four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

14 And Shelah lived thirty years, and begat Eber: 15 and Shelah lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

16 And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg: 17 and Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters.

18 And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu: 19 and Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters.

20 And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug: 21 and Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters.

22 And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor: 23 and Serug lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

24 And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah: 25 and Nahor lived after he begat Terah a hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters.

26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor and Haran.

Perhaps we ought to stop and face the question of the excessively great age assigned to all these men, both here and in the fifth chapter. In the list of those before the flood the ages were much greater than of those here, averaging about nine hundred years or more. After the flood they drop to just about half, ranging between four and five hundred. After the time of Peleg, when we have conceived that the specific North Semite race to which Abraham belonged branched off, again there was a sudden drop to about half, the ages ranging about two hundred and thirty or less.

Various suggestions are made with reference to this. One is that these names refer not to individuals but to families or dynasties. It would be impossible to believe that man actually lived to such great ages, or that their first sons were born to them at such great ages. But families or dynasties might last that long, and the birth of a son might mean the time when a subsidiary house or family arose that was later to attain to supreme power. We use words very often that way, thus York, Lancaster, Richmond, Argyle and the like in English history, may refer either to the family or line that bore that name, or to the particular individual head of the house at the time under consideration. In the Bible, Israel and Judah are used either of the individual men or of the nations that descend from them.

These questions would be more important if there were any possibility of identifying these accounts with actual persons and facts in history. For the antediluvians that of course is impossible, and practically so for all. For our study here too it is unimportant, as we are seeking only for religious messages. It would simplify the whole matter if we were allowed to treat all these stories just as parables to embody religious truths, like the parables of Jesus, embodying real historic facts where they were obtainable, but the value to be sought in the implications of the story itself, not in its information for history.

In that case it would be easy to suppose that the author assigned great age to his heroes just as a mark of reverence or importance. We very often see an ancient artist depicting his kings and heroes of gigantic size with the commoners or captives small, in the same way. It was merely a conventional expedient of art. His twice stepping the length of the lives down to just half at two important epochs seems such a conventional, artificial procedure that it might suggest some such meaning.

We may notice that this same expedient of attributing excessive ages to heroes is used in other ancient stories, and occurs in Babylonian literature. In an old tablet a list of their kings before their deluge is given, numbering ten also as here before the flood, and with names bearing considerable similarity to the names in our list. But they are much more liberal than our author, and the ages of their antediluvian kings sum up 432,000 years. It would seem as though there might have been some connection between the sources or traditions on which the two stories were founded, and also between their ways of assigning ages for their heroes.

In our Bible, too, where metaphor is so much used, we find a metaphorical use of numbers. For instance, no one supposes that Rev. 7:5-9 and 14:1 mean that there were just one hundred and forty-four thousand good people in Israel and countless numbers in the rest of the world. The same use of numbers is true of the measures of the city in Rev. 21:16, where not only the length and breadth but the height of it also is declared to be twelve thousand furlongs, or more than a thousand miles. There are many time numerals in that book and in Daniel, which, whether or not they can be translated into some number of actual years are certainly metaphorical. The Seven Days of Genesis first are conceded not to mean periods of time.

So then we are not at all illogical in counting that these large numbers attached to the names of these patriarchs are not to be interpreted as asserting that these men actually lived that many years, but have some other meaning of some kind, and it is plausible to suppose that it may be that suggested above—just a device to indicate greatness.

PART II

THE GUIDED LIFE

CHAPTER VIII

Following the Gleam

I

CHAPTER eleven, verse twenty-seven begins a new section with the words:

"These are the generations of Terah."

Though the name of Terah is used in the heading we know that we have arrived at the history of Abraham and the patriarchs.

We feel at once that we are entering a new atmosphere. It seems almost in some respects like a new book. It is commonly considered the second division of the book. It is not really a different book with a different author, or even a different movement. There is no such break as between Genesis and Exodus, either in time, style or motive. The narrative is consecutive, and in the same strain, only much more full in detail.

It is commonly considered that from this point on the book has more the appearance of ordinary history than that which goes before. This seems quite plausible, and yet there is something more than that in the explanation.

If our theory of interpretation is correct, what chiefly makes the difference is that the author is now entering upon the second part of his argument. In what goes before he has been telling what not to do. Now he is going to tell what we should do. He has before been describing roads that lead to failure, now he is going to describe the one road that leads to success. He has been outlining for us five great theories of life, five different methods that men put before them as the means for attaining the highest state, and has shown of all of them, either that they only led to disappointment or that God had declared that they were not good. Now he is going to solve his own problem. He is going to maintain that there is a way of life that will not fail but will insure both satisfaction and success. There is a way that is approved by God and that will bring in rich measure all the good and noblest things of life.

We rightly expect that in outlining such a way, the way that he approved, he would describe it with more fullness, go with more sympathy into the details, and make a more attractive human story. We will expect a closer view of more real persons and of the things they said, felt and did, that we may really see the life they lived and be impressed by it the way the author wished. That is the reason we have so much more realism and more historical detail in this part of the book.

What is that plan which he is now going to present? What is the nature of that method which is to succeed? What is that approved way which the author promises will yield that something which he had sought and not been able to find in the five régimes we have already had?

We may define it in a word as "The Personally Conducted Régime." He had tried Environment, Efficiency, Ecclesiasticism, Punishment and Nationalism, and rejected them all as failures. His plan now is to get certain men to submit their lives to be conducted personally by God. God is going to maintain continual personal contact with them and there is to be a working agreement between them. Certain men are to live their lives in that way and we are to see, as before, what is the result.

27 Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram,

Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. 29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. 30 And Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. 32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

12 Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: 2 and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: 3 and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 4 So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. 8 And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. 9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

Is this really the meaning of all this story? Is this the message it is intended to convey? That it is so is indicated in the first place by the way the narrative is introduced. It is introduced by a challenge to a man to do that very thing. God comes to Abram and challenges him to just that relation—to submit his life to be directed by God. He comes to him and tells him to go forth to a land that he will show him (chap. 12:1). It must be noted that he does not tell him where to go. He merely tells him to start in a certain direction and instructs him to go until he tells him to stop. There is important suggestion there. It was not merely an order to carry out but a conducted journey in which God goes with him and shows him where to go. And that is the attitude that God seems to maintain toward him all through the story.

Then there were the covenants or personal promises and bargains that were made from time to time. Six separate times God came to Abram with definite assurances of his care and of favors that he was going to give him distinctly on the ground of the special relation in which Abram stood to him. The bargain on Abram's side if not definitely expressed is always implied. The same promises of guidance and care are also made to Isaac and Jacob at least five separate times, besides a number of other occurrences that had the same implication. Anything made so prominent and emphatic cannot be dismissed as a mere embellishment. It is the central thought that conditions the whole movement.

All this is reinforced by the fact that again and again we shall find as we proceed with our study, God does things for Abram that could only be justified on the ground that there was such a pledged relation between God and him, as for instance in Egypt (chap. 12:17), and with Abimelech (chap. 20:3). Indeed it is one criticism that is made that the book represents God as thus partisan, taking Abram's side and acting with partiality in his favor.

And on the other hand, again, this meaning is made more sure by the contrast of a man who deliberately separated himself from that personal conducting, and whose story ends in utter disaster and disgrace (chap. 13:11 and 19:33-36).

As we are not making any claim of historicity or basing anything on the actual occurrence of any of these events, merely trying to find out what the author meant to say, it is not our problem to prove whether there actually were any such covenants or not. We do not need to establish whether the Israelites were or were not "God's peculiar people," whether God did or did not give to Abram and his descendants any special care, guidance and favor that he was not equally giving to all other people and nations.

All that we are interested in is that the author pictures it so and builds his story on that supposition. It is only the story that we are studying. He represents that God had made such a bargain and was carrying it out. He is painting things as they would work out in such a state of affairs. He reiterates this again and again, and makes all his story depend on that condition. It is the author's message that we are interested in. We are trying here only to find out what he wished to teach.

If we are going to interpret his story at all we must interpret it as he meant it or we cannot expect to make any logical sense out of it. To deny or ignore those promises of special treatment would be like "interpreting *Hamlet* with Hamlet left out." Only by interpreting it with and by them can we get the message which the author intended to convey.

It may be objected that God does not do that way in reality. He does not give any special care or favor to any special people. If the author represents him as doing that he is simply mistaken, so what is the use of studying his story?

Well, that is not our problem here. Still we may stop to remark that Jesus represents God as acting that way to people now. That is the way the New Testament asks us to think of God. Our whole Christian system is built upon the idea that those persons who stand in a certain attitude and relation to God will receive from him a care, guidance and favor most important which other persons not in that relation will not get—for instance forgiveness of their sins and a future of felicity. Our author, if he is mistaken is at least in very good company. And at any rate, we want to find out what he did mean to teach.

II

In working out this scheme our author shows dramatic skill. He sets his stage with just the variety of persons to illustrate all the various conditions of the problem. He tries the experiment with all kinds of people. There are the three several Patriarchs, exemplifying three very different types of character, who are under God's conducting, and whose lives were crowned with success. At the side of each of them there is a brother or kinsman who, each for a different reason, does not become a party to the conducted relation, and who, although in merely material lines they may have atttained a measure of success, yet are finally all blocked out of the action as unfit and failures. Besides this there was, to represent the general public, the group of Jacob's ten older sons, not so conspicuous yet labeled in the end as scoring success Finally the argument is all topped off with one perfect example in the flawless hero Joseph. We will find we have here thus represented practically all the elements in life and society, and for each class or kind of men the story depicts that success came to those individuals whose lives were personally conducted, and to those not personally conducted it did not come.

Abraham is the strong, noble, good man, who still registers some failures in the early part of his career, but in the end comes out the grand model for the ages.

Isaac represents the quiet, mediocre man, of good training and sheltered life. He does nothing conspicuous but lives worthily and passes on a good heredity and a good example. Jacob is, on the other hand, just the opposite, the strong but unprincipled, purely self-seeking man. That is his character to start with, but he definitely aligns himself under the promised personal conducting of God, and God, true to his part of the contract, gradually changes him over into the worthy old patriarch that he becomes in his later years.

By the side of Abraham he places Lot. He was a man of good morals and good character, naturally as far as appears, about as good as Abraham in this respect. But, according to the narrative, when the crisis time came for him to choose he did not choose to trust himself to the "personal conducting" of God, but selfishly chose to go down to what seemed to him promising prospects in the valley of Jordan, away from the shelter and guidance of the covenants (chap. 13:10-13).

It plainly was the author's purpose to show that this decision was a fatal mistake, and without the personal guidance of God even such a good man as Lot went down and down to ruin.

A first warning disaster came with the raid of the kings from the east recounted in the fourteenth chapter. They plundered Sodom and carried him off with the rest of the captives. He was rescued by his God-conducted uncle Abram, but still he stayed outside of the covenants.

At last full disaster came. His home and all he had was destroyed in the overthrow of Sodom. All his married children had so apostatised that they refused to be warned and perished. His wife "looked back and was turned to a pillar of salt." In the last view we have of him in the story his two daughters have made him drunk and debauched him and themselves by incest, and there, debauched and disgraced, the story leaves him. Poor old man! Such an end for even a good man that would not commit his way to be personally conducted by God (chap. 19:30-36).

The other two, Isaac and Jacob, had each a brother beside him, who might be presumed to have equal natural qualifications, only they were outside of the personally conducting covenant. The author takes pains to feature different reasons for being out. Ishmael is in a sense thrust out or kept out by the circumstances of his heredity and the actions of other people. Esau was out because, by a contemptuous choice, he counted the relation of no value and definitely sold it for a mess of pottage.

We may note this difference if we wish to match the counterpart of them or what they might typify now. In the first case we might count those whom we call the heathen, who are out by their birth, or because they have not been given the opportunity to come in. In the second class would be the great mass all around us who choose to sell their heavenly birthright for a mess of—automobiles, cabarets and fine clothes.

Because of his promise to Abraham, God did give them what physical blessings he could, and a national future of some importance, just as today all classes get benefit from God's providence, but they were outside the group that had value for the world, and so were dropped out of this story.

III

I wonder what kind of a man was Terah. We usually overlook him and give him little thought. But remember that he was Abraham's father. For a long while he was a much more important person than Abraham. Abraham looked up to him, obeyed him and honored him. He had much to do with making Abraham what he was. The great movement which Abraham heads must have had its roots back in him.

And still farther back those roots doubtless go. We have surmised that this tribe or family had separated off from the rest of the Semite race away back in the time of Peleg, so that Eber the father of Peleg was so important as to give his name to the whole Hebrew race.

Perhaps all down these years from the time of Eber and Peleg their tribe or group had been providentially kept by themselves on a little higher, purer level than the remainder of their race.

And so, at length, there in one of the best of its homes the boy Abram was born, lived and grew up to manhood. The whole family and connection seem to have been in a degree specially faithful to Jehovah. We see no signs of serious religious cleft between Abram and the various other members of his kindred that come into the narrative. Lot was a pious, good man, and Laban and his family worshiped Jehovah (chap. 31:49).

Yet even so, things were not going altogether satisfactorily. Even this selected tribe of Eber was beginning to slip. Like all the five movements we have already considered, it also seemed headed for failure.

Ur, as we now know, was a great and prosperous city. Organized religion had become idolatry. Our excavators there today are uncovering the remains of magnificent temples to the Moon god and other signs of highly developed idol worship. But Abram was, like Enoch, one that sincerely and humbly "walked with God."

This time God did not, as he did with Enoch, take him home to himself. He had another plan. He left him in the world, but he made definite arrangement and promise to *walk with him* there. And so this new experiment was started, a new régime was begun, which was not, like the five that had gone before, to fail, but was to point the true way to final success.

Haran, the brother that died in Ur seems to have been the oldest of the family, for his daughter Milcah became the wife of his brother Nahor, and while the text does not specifically say so, the tone of the narrative seems to indicate that Sarah, Abram's wife was also another of his daughters, possibly the same as Iscah of chapter 11:29. This would agree with Abram's cryptic statement in chapter 20:12.

"She is indeed my sister
The daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother."

The broad usage given to the words brother and sister would easily cover this relation of niece. Thus in chapter 29:12,

"Jacob told Rachel that he was his father's brother,"

meaning really that he was his nephew.

Sarah seems to be represented as a person of importance, and also perhaps to have been conscious of her importance. When Abram went out from Haran it is recorded that,

"He took Sarah his wife."

It would hardly be thought necessary to specify that a man took his wife unless for some reason she was such an important person that it seemed required to mention her.

Lot who went with Abram was his nephew. He was an independent sheik, with flocks and herds and a tribe. He was the son of the oldest brother, and may even have been as old as Abram, and higher in rank.

As we have already noted, this city of Ur from which Abram went out is one that just in the past few years the archæologists have discovered and excavated. It has been a remarkable find of streets and houses and temples and market places. We actually have almost more knowledge of this very ancient Ur of the Chaldees than of the London of the Richards and Henrys.

Another interesting discovery of archæology is a close connection between the cities of Ur and Haran. Haran seems to have been a colony from Ur. How did the call come to Abram to go out from Ur? Was it made easier for him at first that his journey was along a familiar track toward the colony from his own city, at Haran?

IV

Terah was still the head of the family or tribe. If the call came to Abram did he have to persuade his father and get him to go? They seem to have had somewhere in the general region of Canaan before them as objective, but when they got to Haran among their fellow townsmen and kindred the temptation was too great and the trek was stopped.

But the call came to him again, and Abram went on alone from Haran. His father was no longer with him, and his brother Nahor stayed there in Haran. This time there was no more failure.

> "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan
> And into the land of Canaan they came."

Stating it in that form seems to imply blame that they had not done so before but had stopped at Haran. That, apparently must be marked down against Abram as the first fault or failure in following God's leading.

When we read of this journey we are not to think of Abram as a single traveler starting out with his family and a few servants on a sort of "covered wagon" journew to a new home. He was a Bedouin sheik, head of a tribe—a large tribe. He ranked as a prince, and a prince of some importance, as is indicated in his treatment by the king of Gerar, and even by the king of Egypt.

His tribe was large enough that at a moment's notice he could lead out as many as three hundred and eighteen men, not only warriors but select soldiers, able to go off on a long march and strike a successful blow against one of the strong armies of the time (chap. 14). Doubtless it was a tribe numbering some thousands. And since the East never changes, we could see its close counterpart in any of the great Bedouin encampments in the same region today.

His trek seems to have been along the usual caravan route, through Carchemish, Hamath and Damascus, and on down into the land of Canaan. At Shechem, near where Samaria the capital of the northern kingdom was later built, there was a sacred place of worship near "The Oak of Moreh," or as perhaps more properly translated, "The terebinth of the Oracle." We see later references to this place and to this sanctuary tree in the history of Jacob (chap. 35:4), in the last days of Joshua (Josh. 24:26), and it was very near here that the covenant was renewed by Joshua, as directed by Moses, on entering the land of promise (Josh. 8:30-33). This is possibly the place and tree referred to in Judges 9:6. And it was not far from here that Jesus had his conversation with the woman at the well in John 4.

When Abram arrives in Shechem God gives him apparently the first definite intimation of where he was leading him. "This is the land which I am going to give you for a possession," he says. "This is the place to which you were being led." He had been told to go out in that direction and God would tell him where to go (cf. Heb. 11:8). He had definitely trusted himself to be personally led by God. It had been a journey of many months, also a toilsome and dangerous journey. He had at last sufficiently proved his willingness to be entirely subject to the direction of God. So now God appears to him, tells him he has arrived at his destination, and gives him definite information as to what his plans are, and what he intends for him in the future.

> "Jehovah appeared unto Abram and said
> Unto thy seed will I give this land."

The enterprise is now fairly launched. God has selected a man for this sixth and final experiment. That man has failed him once, but God has given indication of the patience and forbearance with which he is going to carry on his part. God has called him again, and this time his faith has held firm. He has not only continued faithfully till he arrived where God was leading him, but he has thereby put himself definitely under the care and conducting of God for the future. A stranger in a strange land, but expecting God to make a place for him, tell him what to do, and see that he was kept in safety and his life made successful.

CHAPTER IX

A Stranger in a Strange Land

I

NOW begins the second phase of his enterprise. He is in the land that is to be his, but as yet he has no possession of any part of it, nor any visible prospect. He has no settled abode, indeed his status is merely that of a Bedouin nomad, dwelling in tents and moving about from place to place to find pasture for his flocks and herds.

When God announced to him that he was to have that land for his possession he acknowledged God's gift and pledged his loyalty to him by building an altar and establishing formally a center of worship. That was about the only sign of his possession or residence anywhere he went for the greater part of his life. It was not long till he moved on to a new pasturage and pitched his tent on a mountain between Bethel and Ai. Here also he built an altar to Jehovah and made a new center of worship.

"The Canaanite was then in the land."

It was not a vacant country but settled up, and all the most fertile parts occupied by the settled farmers. Pasturage would be scant and scarce, so he soon had to keep moving on again, heading toward the south, where, though the country was rougher and less fertile, the inhabitants were fewer, and there were more broad open spaces suitable for pasturing his flocks.

"And Abram journeyed going on still toward the South."

The author is not proposing to give a complete history of Abram, but only to select out a few significant incidents to show the results of God's personal care and guidance. And he intended specially to show that, grand, strong man as he was, he still had his weaknesses and his failures. Without God's help these easily might have been his ruin, as they were of his companion Lot, also a noble and good man. But because God was personally conducting Abram and had definitely pledged his alliance, he rescued him safely from all his mistakes and weaknesses, and brought him out at last a model man, an inspiration of faith and righteousness to the world.

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was sore in the land. 11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou are a fair woman to look upon: 12 and it will come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee. 14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. 15 And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And he dealt well with Abram for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels. 17 And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me she was thy wife? 19 why saidst thou, She is my sister, so that I took her to be my wife? now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20 And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him: and they brought him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had.

"There was a famine in the land
And Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there."

Does the author intend this to be considered a weakness and a wrong step by Abram? He had not been directed by God to go there. It was to get him away from the contamination of one of the great, populous centers of the world in Chaldea that God had led him out to Canaan, and now he is going right into the other great center of busy world life in Egypt. He is being led, or lured, by economic considerations to go to the place that promised the easiest conditions of life—and the greatest temptations and snares for both himself and his family—just as Lot was when he chose to go down into the fertile Jordan valley, "and moved his tents as far as Sodom" (chap. 13:12).

Unquestionably he failed and fell after he got there. One failure or act of cowardice usually leads to another. He had yielded to fear of famine, and now he yields to another fear. He was afraid the king of Egypt would want to take his wife Sarah into his harem and would kill him in order to get her. So he had her and the rest of the encampment give the word to the Egyptians that she was his sister.

This might be much easier and more plausible than we would perhaps suppose. It was a large encampment with various sections and complications. There was in it the independent sheik Lot with a following of his own, and probably other special persons of more or less prominence. If we rightly estimate the character of Sarah she would doubtless surround herself with a good deal of dignity and importance and have a magnificent tent and court, so that it would not be hard to mistake her for an independent ally.

That she did maintain such a separate tent and establishment is confirmed in chapter 24:67. There it is said that Isaac brings Rebekah "into his mother Sarah's tent."

It was three years after his mother's death, and his father Abraham was living at another place, yet that tent was such an important feature of the encampment that it was still kept there intact. It might not then be strange or difficult to have the word given out now that she was like Lot (her brother?), just an allied chief traveling with Abram and confederate with him being his sister.

Something about her state and dignity and her general magnificence attracted the notice of the Pharaoh, and he thought it would be an addition to have her attached to his own court. At her age it would be that rather than her physical beauty that would be attractive in her. The natural way to do this would be to have her attached to his court as one of his wives. This he proposed. Sarah made no objection and it was done.

On his part it was perhaps largely a political movement, gaining the alliance of a powerful Bedouin sheik, and he took pains to make sheik Abram consider the alliance profitable by making him presents and opening up opportunities, so that he soon gained very great wealth in the things that were valuable to him—

> "Sheep and oxen and he-asses and men servants
> and maid servants and she-asses and camels."

Still Abram could not but feel that he had made a sorry mess of it after all. What was the gain of a little property to the breaking up of all his home life? He had lost his wife, with all that that would naturally mean to him. And besides he would be eternally disgraced when the news of it got abroad. He would be a laughingstock among all his associates in spite of his wealth. His whole life would be seriously marred.

II

What will God do? On any other hypothesis than that which we have assumed here the acts recorded of God would be indefensible. He sends plagues on Pharaoh and his house to force him to restore Abram's wife to him again, and does nothing to punish Abram.

Pharaoh had done no intentional or conscious wrong. He had simply, as far as he knew, made an honorable alliance with a powerful Bedouin sheik by marrying his sister. And in addition he had been specially generous to him, loading him with presents and favors. Abram had done conscious, intentional wrong. He had been guilty of deceit and cowardice, besides bringing his wife into a compromising and sinful position. If God is the moral ruler of men why does he not punish Abram for his sins, or at the very least leave him to the natural loss and shame of his act, and put his protection around Pharaoh? But he does not do so. He sends plagues on Pharaoh to make him restore the wife, and gets Abram out of the trouble he had brought on himself.

Right there is involved the main point of the whole book. The object of the author is not to depict God as the moral ruler of men. Plenty of books had already been written to do that, for philosophic literature was not a new thing. It was another aspect of God's attitude to men that he wished to portray, an aspect quite as important as his justice and moral rule. His specific purpose in this book was to depict God in a personal, friendly, partnership relation with men, definitely befriending individuals.

God is proposing to be to Abram just the conducting companion and friend that a father might be to his son, or any man might be to another to whom he had pledged friendship. It is not justice but the loyalty—partiality if you wish—that friend should always give to friend.

Do you say, that is an attitude unworthy of God? God will never do that, God must always be just? Very well, he was just, never fear! Abram got punishment and suffering enough in due course. For one thing he got unceremoniously pitched bag and baggage out of the country. God did not need to worry about his getting suitably punished. His wisdom has provided natural means that will attend to that without any interposition of the supernatural.

But it was an important thing for God to show himself a friend that did not fail when a friend was needed. The whole New Testament labors to show God in just that attitude, willing and anxious to be a personal friend to men, with all that friendship implies. That was the mission of Jesus Christ. He was called "the friend of publicans and sinners," and said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners."

Our whole Christian system is founded on the belief that if we enter into the same relation to God which we are considering that Abram was in, God is going to act just that way to us, and give us undeserved favors, both here and hereafter. This Genesis story teaches nothing different from what the New Testament teaches. If it is wrong the New Testament and Jesus are also wrong.

What we should rather remark is the important fact that the deepest and most precious truths of New Testament salvation are taught right here in this Genesis narrative, and taught just in the form most suitable to impress the ordinary, everyday man. The Old Testament merely translates vital doctrines into homely, everyday acts.

Through God's personally conducting, this incident, and its punishment which it brought, was in the end a means of good, by getting Abram again safely out of Egypt. His grandson Jacob came down into Egypt in the same identical way to escape from a famine, and his family did not get away again for four hundred years. But when the Pharaoh gave Abram back his wife he told him to leave the country—and saw to it that he did leave.

> "Behold thy wife, take her and go thy way."
>
> "Pharaoh gave charge concerning him
> And they brought him on the way."

The man personally conducted by God has here no assurance that he will never fall into fault or sin, but he does have assurance that if he does, though he may suffer for it yet God will bring him out again to safety.

III

Turned out of Egypt Abram went up into the Negeb, the semi-desert country south of Judah, commonly called "the South." It was the first habitable land he would reach on his way up from Egypt. He later spent considerable time in that region. But now he was not at rest. He felt that he had been guilty of a sorry relapse and wanted to do something to wipe out the memory of it. He wanted to get clear back into harmonious relations with God again. And so he travels away up to the scenes of his earlier communion with God, and the altar he had built near Bethel when he first came into the land. Special places and old associations have great value with the oriental. There he might get back again to the early enthusiasm of his great venture of trust.

13 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. 2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his

journeys from the South even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Ai, 4 unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah. 5 And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land. 8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou take* the right hand, then I will go to the left. 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. 11 So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly.

14 And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: 15 for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it. 18 And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah.

The author has told the story of his shameful fall, and now he wants to restore his credit again by telling a story of his nobility and faith, and also the story of the man who fell because he did not have that relation of full, trustful following of God which Abram had.

"And Lot also who went with Abram
Had flocks and herds and tents."

Lot was a confederate and a kinsman, but yet he was, or aimed to be, an independent chief. The son of the oldest brother, perhaps he considered himself Abram's superior. The land was poor. Flocks and herds had to travel far to find sufficient pasture. There would be rivalry for the best places, leading to strife.

Abram, perhaps partly to wipe out the memory of his late fall by a noble gesture, called Lot and bade him make his choice of whatever part of the land he liked best, and he, Abram, would take his flocks and herds away to other parts and leave that part to him.

It was not only generosity, but an act of faith and trust in the leading of God on Abram's part. The land was wide that God had promised him, and God would take care of him somewhere. That was Abram's attitude.

Lot's attitude was entirely self-centered and self-directed. It was not wrong or base. It is just as much good courtesy to accept a gift that is offered as it is to offer it. The only mistake Lot made was that he did not elect to some way stay under the personal conducting of God which Abram was under, either by still continuing an integral part of the God-conducted tribe under Abram perhaps, or by doing something to throw himself distinctly on the guidance and direction of God, as Abram was doing. He separated himself from the movement that was under a covenant.

We need not say that Lot did anything exactly wrong, but he did not do the critical right thing at the critical time. He made a choice that was not conditioned on God's guiding, and this may sometimes have fatal results. By his choice he was outside of the "personally conducted" régime that Abram was under. We have already spoken of the results.

I suppose we may say also, on general lines, that it was an unwise choice. He chose the way of wealth among evil surroundings, a way that very many choose now, and which is always dangerous. He gradually

"Moved his tent as far as Sodom."

and before long was living permanently right in the city.

"Now the men of Sodom were wicked
And sinners against Jehovah exceedingly."

Abram had done a noble and generous act to try to clean his conscience and get back again into comfortable relations with God. And God, as a good friend, reciprocates and makes a renewal of his assurances and promises, adding some particulars to his covenant, and making it as vivid and assuring as he could.

Abram had fulfilled his purpose in going back to the associations of his old sanctuary near Bethel. There was no need to stay there longer. Perhaps he wanted to leave all available pasturage in that region to his nephew Lot. So now he moves again toward the South—

"And came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre
that are in Hebron."

In a hot country great, spreading trees would offer a great advantage for the center of a Bedouin encampment.

"And built there an altar unto Jehovah."

This is a characteristic act of Abram everywhere he goes, and is the key to his whole life.

IV

The next chapter seems almost like a stranger in our narrative. It looks much as if it were a stray manuscript that the author had found in some old library and copied verbatim into his story. And yet the author had a purpose in putting it in as it shows a phase of Abram's character that he considered it important for us to see.

That it is closely copied from some old manuscript would seem to be indicated by the slight difference of style, with a great amount of minute detail, and also by the fact that in five different instances he had to add the current name of a place to make it intelligible.

14 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, 2 that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar). 3 All these joined together in the vale of Siddim (the same is the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 And they returned, and came to En-mishpat (the same is Kadesh), and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazazon-tamar. 8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar); and they set the battle in array against them in the vale of Siddim; 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings against the five. 10 Now the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell there, and they that remained fled to the mountain. 11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. 12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew: now he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Abram. 14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. 15 And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and

pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. 16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, at the vale of Shaveh (the same is the King's Vale). 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of [1]God Most High. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of [1]God Most High, [2]possessor of heaven and earth: 20 and blessed be [1]God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all. 21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto Jehovah, [1]God Most High, [2]possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: 24 save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

It is quite common to identify this Amraphel with the great Hamurapi, the first king who united the Babylonian provinces into a strong nation, and who was the author of the famous "Code of Hamurapi" which was the basis of law in that region for many centuries. The name is practically the same, allowing for the way words are transliterated from one language into another. We also notice a peculiar feature in the introduction of the story. While Chedorlaomer is acknowledged leader of the expedition and head of the confederacy yet the whole incident is described as

"In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar,"

his name being put first. That seems strange, but it would be natural enough if, although subordinate now he was the one who later became so very famous.

No account of this raid is found on any of the monuments yet discovered, but this is not strange as it was not of any great importance, and the records we have found are only a small fraction of the literature of those times. And anyway, kings are not eager to record their reverses.

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[1] Heb. *El Elyon.*
[2] Or, *maker.*

On the other hand, it was just the kind of thing that was likely to occur frequently. All these little states were right on the route that had to be passed through by either Egypt or its rival in the Euphrates region in their frequent wars with each other. Their possession would be therefore rather important to either nation. They were conquered and made subject by one or the other, would occasionally rebel to be free when they thought they could, and then expeditions would be sent out to punish them and bring them into subjection again, just as this story depicts.

Abram, as we have noted, was not merely a private man living there with his family, but the sheik or prince of a large tribe. He got the word that his kinsman Lot had been carried away captive in one of such punitive raids. The blood bond between them would be a call to Abram to go to the rescue of his kinsman. Abram was not the kind of a man to refuse such a call. The life of the Bedouin makes him a natural warrior. He must always be ready to fight at a moment's notice, against bands of robbers or against other Bedouin tribes as fierce and warlike as his own.

Abram quickly assembled a large body of fighting men out of his own tribe, called on his three allies, Mamre, Aner and Eschol to go with him, and immediately starts in pursuit of the raiding bands, a big Bedouin army on swift-racing camels.

That Abram should be able to fight and conquer this army from the great Babylonian kingdoms is not impossible. The expedition was doubtless only a minor affair, and while the names of the four confederate kings are attached to it, we need not necessarily suppose they were themselves there in person. Abram had three hundred and eighteen men and his confederates had their contingents, probably altogether a thousand men or more, and all seasoned desert warriors, just trained for this kind of sudden surprise attack.

Professor Huntington says that natural selection and the conditions of their life have made the Bedouin preeminently a man that is able to endure hardship and long marches, and to strike with fanatical intensity. It was the quality that enabled a handful of Arabs in Mohammed's day to conquer half the world.

The army of the kings had relaxed, supposing they were out of danger of pursuit. Abram used desert tactics, made his attack at night and struck from several sides at once, with such fury that the raiding army was thrown into complete panic, and in that state would be at the mercy of the fierce Bedouin warriors. They left everything and fled. After pursuing them far enough to assure that they would not come back Abram and his forces returned, collected the captives and the goods, and conducted all safely back home.

It is an interesting sidelight on the character of Abram that, though by the rules of war all the plunder that he found in the conquered camp was his, he refused to take any of it that had come from the city of Sodom, where his nephew Lot had lived. The confederates, Mamre, Aner and Eschol, however, did not have any compunctions against taking their full share from all the war booty.

A rather strange incident was the interview of Abram with Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, probably the place afterward called Jerusalem. The god he worshiped was "El Elyon," translated in our Bibles "God Most High." Abram recognized this as the same God that he worshiped, and the supreme God, for later, speaking to the king of Sodom he puts the two names, Jehovah and El Elyon, together as indicating the same person, and further designates him as "Possessor of heaven and earth."

But why should Abram give to this Melchizedek such a great present—one tenth of all the spoils he had taken? Doubtless there is more to the story, earlier relations of Abram with Melchizedek which we know nothing about. Perhaps Abram is merely doing just what in all classical ancient history we see conquering heroes doing. The warrior makes an offering to the temple of some god that he supposes has helped him, or that he entreats to help him in a future battle. It was the conventional thing to do. Abram, as a nomad, had no permanent temple of his own suitable for such an offering and so he offers here to this one in Salem, where the God worshiped was the same that he worshiped.

Besides being an act of homage to God it would also help his relations with the settled people of that region if they knew that he had made a large offering to one of their local sanctuaries. He recognized this Melchizedek as a monotheist, worshiping the creator of the universe just as he did. That he felt as a strong bond of union. And as Melchizedek had taken special pains to greet and honor him it was natural that he should make his votive offering at his sanctuary.

V

15 After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what

wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.

Abram had now atoned for his shameful weakness in Egypt by two specially noble actions, both, by the way, in connection with his kinsman Lot, who still insisted on staying outside of the God-guided régime. And God recognized his efforts by again appearing to him in a friendly way.

> "Fear not Abram
> I am thy *shield* and thy exceeding great *reward*."

This was appropriate greeting after his great *generosity* and the great *peril* he had just bravely met.

But time passed, and Abram's faith was beginning to get just a bit wobbly again. He was all right so far, but what of the future? He had no son to succeed him in authority in the tribe. This would be an anxiety to any man. He would want an heir to carry on his line and his name. But much more so to a Bedouin chief, whose power is such a personal thing. Old age would bring weakness. Someone else would have to be the acting leader of the tribe and its prospective head. It might very easily be some strong man who had chafed under his authority, and when he got too weak to longer control might turn him out and treat him with indignity.

> "I go childless, and he that shall be possessor
> of my house is Eliezar of Damascus."

Possibly this was a threatening rival that he saw already rising into prominence. He was a foreigner, too, from Damascus, who might have been not even a sincere worshiper of Jehovah. Might not the whole purpose for which he had dared and endured so much, be lost if the tribe thus reverted to the control of a foreigner?

But God forestalls any break in Abram's faith by renewing his promise in still stronger terms than before, and giving him the assurance that he should have an actual son to succeed him. Abram accepted this assurance with full confidence—at least for the time—and ceased to have any more anxiety. The strange expression is used:

"And he believed in Jehovah
And he reckoned it to him for righteousness."

This seems to have been an important matter, for it is quoted and commented on in the New Testament (Gal. 3:6). What does it mean?

In the author's view and in God's view this trustful attitude of Abram was a critical matter. It meant unquestioning deference to his commander, a most vital thing in an officer or soldier. The crucial point was not that a man do great deeds, or even that he have no faults, but that he maintain this attitude of full responsiveness to the leading and plans of God. We still recognize that as the highest virtue when men are being led or commanded.

"Theirs not to reason why
Theirs not to make reply."

It means then, that Abram was being led. By this statement the author stamps all this movement to be intended as a personally conducted régime for it is response to that conducting of God which is here put down as the essence of the Righteousness that God wants. This is quite reasonable if that conducting is a very important thing.

The oriental is always fond of ceremonies and symbolic signs. So when Abram asked for some token to go with the promise that he should inherit the land, God gave him what he asked for, but he also included in it something not so grateful. For the token he gave indicated that before his descendants should finally come into the inheritance they would first have to go through a long and trying experience.

7 And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, O Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9 And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. 10 And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not. 11 And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. 17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. 18 In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, 20 and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, 21 and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.

In characteristic oriental form God makes his message vivid to Abram by a symbolic scene. He has Abram prepare a sacrifice of three animals and two birds. By cutting the animals into two parts and laying the halves opposite each other, and the two birds also opposite each other the bodies were laid in two rows, as indicating that there were two parties to a covenant. As there were four pieces in each row that might indicate that the number four was to figure in some way.

Vigilance is required of Abram to keep away the birds of prey that would have spoiled the whole affair. This would suggest an obvious meaning to him.

Then there fell a darkness and a numbness on Abram as the sun went down. And he saw a smoking furnace and a blazing torch pass through between the two rows of the offering. By common usage the furnace would symbolize affliction and the torch would symbolize leading.

God interpreted it all to mean that his descendants should suffer affliction as captives in a strange land for four hundred years (the furnace), but God would still take care of them and finally bring them out again in triumph to this land of their inheritance (the torch).

VI

These incidents were some of the high points in Abram's life, and as often happens, the moment of greatest assurance comes just before a fall. As with his great progenitor Adam, it was his wife that got him into the trouble, though his own reviving anxiety about the succession may have had something to do with it.

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid,

after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: Jehovah judge between me and thee. 6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face.

We have seen that Sarah was a high born, very stately and probably ambitious person. Abram had been distinctly promised that he should have a son, but she was entirely too old to have any hope to bear that son. Would it then be a son by another wife? In that case she would be largely superseded and dropped to a minor place, and another would have the place of chief importance as mother of the heir. Was there no way to prevent that calamity? She hit upon a way. It was a doubtful and desperate expedient, but the need was desperate, and it was the best she could think of.

She had a slave named Hagar. The slave was her possession, so any son born to her slave would be hers, under her possession and control. She would give her slave to her husband to use as a concubine, and then when a son should be born it would fulfil the promise of an heir made to Abram, and at the same time the son would be under her control, so there would not be any rival to supplant her and take her place.

Theoretically it was a keen scheme, but when put to the actual test it did not work out exactly as she expected. Hagar was taken by Abram, and when she saw that she was soon to become the mother of his child her attitude toward her mistress Sarah changed. Perhaps Abram's attitude toward her as the prospective mother of his child may have had something to do with it. Possibly she may even have been a woman of some rank and family before she became a captive and a slave, and hoped now she would be restored again to her old rank and be a person of importance. At any rate she let it be seen that she considered her old relation to Sarah was ended and now she must be considered only in her new relation to Abram.

Sarah soon saw that her plan had gone entirely astray. Not only was she after all going to be supplanted by the mother of the new heir, but she was going to be supplanted by her own slave, who would soon have a position and consideration higher than her own. This she could never stand. So she turns on Abram and blames him with the whole trouble. She is so persistent and bitter that he finally gives in to her and says, "She is your slave. You can do with her whatever you wish."

With a free hand given her, Sarah begins to treat her slave so cruelly and exasperatingly that she could not—or would not—stand it, and ran away.

A very interesting sidelight is thrown on this incident by recently discovered monuments. There is one of the laws in the recently recovered "Code of Hamurapi," that seems to cover just exactly such a case as this. Section 146 of that code, in vogue for a thousand years in all this region, and largely a compilation of laws in force for a long while before, reads as follows:

> §146. "If a man takes a priestess, and she gives to her husband a maid-servant, and she bears children and afterward that maid-servant would take rank with her mistress; Because she has borne children her mistress may not sell her for money, but she may reduce her to bondage and count her among the female slaves" (Handcock's translation, p. 24).

Apparently this law was known to her, and so Sarah did the only thing she could well do. She reduced Hagar back to her former status as her slave, and having her at her mercy as a slave, in her jealousy treated her so harshly that she ran away. She could not sell her, and would not send her away free, so this was about the only way she saw open to give vent to her jealousy, and also to get her out of the encampment.

But God was not going to have such a disgraceful and unjust action left to stand, or Abram's child to be thus abandoned, under his pledged conducting. So he sent an angel to find her in the wilderness and send her back to her mistress, at the same time promising her that she should bear a son that should be the ancestor of an important nation.

She went back again, and let us hope that Abram saw to it that she had more decent treatment in the future. In due time her son was born and was named Ishmael. We shall hear more about him before the story is through.

7 And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction. 12 And he shall be *as* a wild ass among men; his hand *shall* be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren. 13 And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me? 14 Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of

his son, whom Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

VII

The next chapter is a rather formal one, telling how God appointed the rite of circumcision to be observed by Abram and his descendants. It is to be the sign of membership in their nation, the body that is to be heir of the covenants and promises God has given. This was a rite practiced by quite a number of people in ancient times, and even down to the present. It was by the Israelites given supreme importance as the distinctive sign and indispensable condition of membership in their nation and for nearly four thousand years now it has been faithfully observed.

Obedient to the direction of God, Abram himself, his family and all the members of his vast tribe observed the rite. It was an important epoch in their history, and two or three other occurrences are noted at the same time.

Abram's name was changed to Abraham, which is a little more distinguished, being considered to suggest that he was to be the father of a multitude of nations. The promise that he was to inherit all the land through which he was now wandering, was renewed and confirmed to him. Also the promise was definitely made to him that it should be a full-rank son, the son of his wife Sarah, that should be his heir and successor.

Promise of a good future was made for Ishmael and his descendants, but the heir was to be a son of his legal wife Sarah. The word Isaac, which was to be the name of that son, means laughter, and with the Hebrew fondness for punning both here and on two occasions afterward a pun is made on the name from the laughter that the thought of a son born in such old age provoked.

17 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am [3]God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called [4]Abram, but thy name shall be [5]Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9 And God said unto Abraham, And as for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner that is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

15 And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but [6]Sarah shall her name be. 16 And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. 17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18 And Abraham

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[3] Heb. *El Shaddai.*
[4] That is, *exalted father.*
[5] That is, *father of a multitude.*
[6] That is, *Princess.*

said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee! 19 And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name [7]Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

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[7] From the Heb. word meaning *to laugh*.

CHAPTER X

Tragedy

I

IN chapters eighteen and nineteen we have another instance of the author's inimitable art as a story teller. Folk lore may produce nature tales that have a beauty and interest, but here we have a long series of incidents, all contributing to the author's main thesis, and told with perfect dramatic art. We are considering it merely as a story, irrespective of its foundation or its sources. Each picture is painted in few words, makes its point impressively and fits in as a necessary part of the whole situation the author wishes to portray.

18 And Jehovah appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth, 3 and said, My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4 let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5 and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and strengthen ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on: forasmuch as ye are come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes. 7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto the servant; and he hasted to dress it. 8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. 10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now

Abraham and Sarah were old, *and* well stricken in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12 And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13 And Jehovah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old? 14 Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son. 15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

First we have the grand old patriarchial sheik Abraham, sitting before his tent in the heat of the day, under the shade of the wide spreading terebinth or camphor tree. He looks up and sees three strangers approaching. With fine Bedouin hospitality he runs to meet them and invites them to be his guests.

Hospitality is the great virtue of the desert dweller, and Abraham throws his whole soul into treating his guests royally. He apparently recognizes from the first that they are persons of importance. He directs Sarah herself to knead flour and make cakes, and he goes personally to the flock to get a calf which he has the servants prepare.

The etiquette of the desert would prescribe that the strangers eat before they told their message, as it might be such as to preclude hospitality, and the strangers accept the feast prepared. All this is manifestly preliminary to some great event that the story teller is about to relate. And he still further heightens the suspense and expectation by intruding a little side incident before beginning the principal action of the story.

Abraham stood beside his guests to serve them as they ate, but it was not proper form for his wife to be present. However, the strangers inquire for her, and are told that she is, as would be expected, in the tent. Thereupon they make the announcement to Abraham that God is going to give Sarah a son.

Now, of course, we would not think of accusing Sarah of eavesdropping, however, she somehow happened to be in the tent entrance just behind Abraham where he did not see her. When she heard this prediction she thought it so absurd that she burst out laughing. The stranger with perhaps a little tinge of reproach at the discourtesy, turns to Abraham and says, "Why did your wife laugh?" and adds, "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?"

Sarah sees that she is caught, sobers up immediately and eagerly denies, "No I did not laugh." But the stranger says, "Yes you did laugh all right," and there was possibly a tinge of laughter in his own voice as he said it, for he well realized how natural it was that she should laugh at a prediction so absurd, and how very human that she should feel confused and deny when caught at it.

II

This little interlude with its half serious, half humorous touch of nature gives us a chance to get ready for the intense and heavy tragedy that is to be the main story.

16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17 And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do; 18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 20 And Jehovah said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before Jehovah. 23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? 24 Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? 25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? 26 And Jehovah said, if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. 27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes: 28 peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five. 29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for the forty's sake. 30 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. 31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake. 32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake. 33 And Jehovah went his way, as soon as he had left off communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

When the meal is finished the three strangers rise up to go on their journey. Their host, Abraham, must walk on a ways with them. The leader, who has been discovered to be Jehovah himself, stops for a little more talk with Abraham, while the other two go on in the direction of Sodom.

The words in verse seventeen are in some respects the most significant and suggestive in the whole book.

"Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?"

"There is such a relation of confidential friendship between us that it would be uncourteous to not take him into my confidence when I am about to do a very important thing."

Fundamentally the great object of this book, as of all the Bible, and its chief contribution to religion is to represent God in such a light as to attract men to him—to picture God as such a person as men could have, and would want to have, fellowship with. That is the purpose of the author here.

He represents that God had come into such close, confidential relations with Abraham that he felt he ought to tell him of the great thing he was going to do. Just as a man would feel that he ought to talk it over with his partner or his close friend when there was some particularly great thing that he was planning to do. "Shall I do this great thing without saying anything to my friend Abraham about it?" It is the high water mark in his picture of this friendly attitude of God.

God tells Abraham that he is going to destroy the city of Sodom for its fearful wickednesss. The author introduces a little touch of realism to emphasize the justice and fairness of God. He will make sure of the facts before he acts.

> "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not I will know."

A magistrate should make careful inquiry before inflicting punishment. The author means by this symbolic note to attribute to God the same character of fairness and justice that would be expected of a human magistrate.

The suggestion that Sodom is to be destroyed is a stunning blow to Abraham. His kinsman Lot is in Sodom. If Sodom is destroyed that will mean the destruction of his nephew Lot. Is there no way that he can avert the calamity? The very fact that God has confided in him seems to suggest that he is open to conference on the subject. Possibly God has come with the very hope that Abraham's intercession might give him an excuse for not inflicting the dreadful catastrophe.

God has said that he is going expressly to see if they are bad enough to deserve destruction. Abraham catches at the first suggestion that comes to him and begins a frantic effort to build up some reason or excuse for saving the city.

"You are a God of perfect justice," he says, "and is not this thing that you are going to do sure to bring about some injustice? The city is wicked, but surely there are some in it—a good many perhaps—who are righteous. If you destroy the city you will destroy them too."

He is going to show God that he ought not to do what he is planning to do, since it might cause a great injustice. He will at least propose some limit. So he makes a definite proposition and request.

"Won't you promise to spare the city if you find as many as fifty righteous people there?"

To his great joy, his plea is successful. "I will so promise," says Jehovah.

His success has been so easy that he wonders if possibly he has asked not quite enough. A pity to fail that way. Possibly that number may not be entirely safe. Perhaps it would be well to shade the number down a little.

"You have agreed to save the city if there are fifty righteous people in it. Now suppose it should turn out to lack just a very little, say to lack five of the fifty. You would not destroy a whole big city just for lack of a little five?"

Jehovah consents to that. He would still spare the city if there are forty-five.

He had been very humble and formal in making these two requests, but Jehovah seems ready to grant, so he comes straight out with another bid. "Even if it lacked another five—how about forty?"

Again he is successful and Jehovah agrees to save the city for even forty righteous.

This all has been granted so freely that he begins to feel just a little cautious. Maybe if he asks too much what has been already granted may be withdrawn. But the spirit of the Hebrew bargainer is now fully aroused, so he brings all the humble language and technical turns of bargaining formula to bear, and asks to cut the number down from forty to thirty. This also is granted.

It works, so he puts on a little more humble talk and asks to cut down from thirty to twenty. This too is immediately granted without any objection.

Just a little shade of compunction begins to be felt. Possibly he is exceeding the bounds of courtesy or even of right in asking so much. But he must do all he can to save Lot. He must try once more. But he has the grace to promise that it will be the last time and he will ask no more. So in a sort of desperation he makes as much as he dares for a final cut, and goes down just one-half, from twenty to ten. Jehovah grants this, too, and says that he will not destroy the city if there are even ten righteous persons in it.

Abraham has pledged himself to stop, but I wonder if he is not sorry now that he had not enough trust in the friendship of Jehovah to come right out frankly and say what was on his heart—ask him to spare the city for the sake of Lot and his family alone, or at least ask him to in some way save him. He did not ask for that, and though God granted everything he asked for, yet in the end he had no assurance or even intimation that Lot would not be destroyed with the rest of the city.

And more than that, he was wrong all through. While we have here a supreme picture of God's readiness to grant our requests, we have also here on Abraham's part a conspicuous example of how not to make our requests. It is a mistake that even now is by no means uncommon in prayer.

Abraham did not have sufficient close confiding in God to just ask for the thing he wanted, the safety of his kinsman Lot. If he had asked for that God would have promised to grant it—as we see later he did save him—and Abraham would have been spared all the anxiety and fear he went through on that account. Instead he thought he had to persuade God to do right and to bring some pressure and argument to bear on him to get him to do right. He practically implied that God was going to do a great injustice and he was intervening to keep him from doing something wrong. Is that element entirely absent from some of our petitions now?

The art of the story is seen in that it worked out beautifully both ways. Abraham's wrong spirit was punished in that he was left with a sense of failure, and with no assurance that his kinsman would be saved. God's friendly kindness, which Abraham failed to realize, was vindicated by the fact that he not only granted all that Abraham asked, but did after all give Abraham the thing that he wanted but did not confide enough to ask for. He did save his kinsman Lot.

III

This ends that scene. Jehovah goes on his way and Abraham goes back to his tents. With the next scene the tragedy is plainly drawing nearer.

19 And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth; 2 and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. 3 And he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. 4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; 5 and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men that came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. 6 And Lot went out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him. 7 And he said, I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. 8 Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing, forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof. 9 And they said, Stand back. And they said, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and drew near to break the door. 10 But the men put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. 11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whomsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of the place: 13 for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxed great before Jehovah; and Jehovah has sent us to destroy it. 14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place: for Jehovah will destroy the city. But he seemed unto his sons-in-law as one that mocked.

The two men of Abraham's three guests come to the city gate of Sodom just at evening. Hotels or lodging houses did not exist, so the stranger must meet with hospitality or lodge in the streets. Night was coming on, so a lodging place for them was an evident necessity. The subsequent behavior of the men of Sodom was sufficient proof that none of them would have offered it.

This situation provided a chance for the author to again feature the natural goodness of Lot. As a man of wealth and rank he was sitting at the gate with the other prominent men. He immediately invites the two travelers to be his guests. They make a polite show of declining, but he insists, takes them home and makes a great feast for them.

The story next features the wickedness of the city, to confirm the justness of God's judgment. A great mob from all parts of the city attacked the house to drag out the strangers, abuse and make sport of them. Lot tried to protect them, and with the exaggerated Bedouin sense of the sacredness of a guest, offered the most extreme sacrifice from his own family. But the mob were bent on mischief, and now charged that Lot himself was no more than a stranger, and were going to maltreat him also. His separate tone of life had evidently made him not very popular among them. But the stranger guests, who were really angels, rescued him and struck the mob with blindness.

One object of this part of the story is to keep before our minds the naturally amiable character of Lot. For the author is going to show that, even with a good man like Lot, because he was not under the personally conducted régime, had deliberately separated from it and decided to depend entirely on natural advantages and his own resources, in the end he came to most pitiable disaster. And as we shall see, his worst disaster was directly the result of his lack of trust. Even such a very superior man as Lot would fall if he declined to depend on God's leading, whereas, as we will also later see, a crooked, bad man like Jacob, with God's leading, would be converted, developed into a fine, noble character, and end in great success.

IV

15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters that are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16 But he lingered; and the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, Jehovah being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. 17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. 18 And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my lord: 19 behold now, thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy lovingkindness, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life: and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest evil overtake me, and I die: 20 behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. Oh let me escape thither (is it not a little one?), and my soul shall live. 21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which thou has spoken. 22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

23 The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came unto Zoar. 24 Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; 25 and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. 26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. 27 And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jehovah: 28 and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the Plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace.

29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

Now the strangers give their message. "This city is going to be destroyed" they say. "We are here to save you. If you have any children or kindred in the city, bring them and we will save them too."

Remember there were four righteous persons in Lot's own house. If there had been only three righteous couples among his family out in the city it would have made up the promised ten and saved the whole city. But there were none. The presumption intended is that these of Lot's own family would be the best in the city. They all only laughed at the warning even when it came from their own father. This all is intended to indicate the complete wickedness of the city, and that God's promise to Abraham was not broken, moreover that his judgment on the city was deserved.

Morning came, and the time for the destruction to begin. It was not easy to leave one's home and all one's possessions to be destroyed. No wonder they lingered. So the two angel guests had to seize them by the hands and almost drag them out of the condemned city. They told them to flee to the mountains, promising to delay long enough that they could get there.

But Lot had never learned to commit himself to be "personally conducted." It seemed a long way to the mountains even though he had been promised safety, and it was a dreary place any way. A little city was nearer across the plain, far enough away from Sodom to seem safe. Might he not go there for safety? Even this was granted to him, and the little city saved for his sake. Yet later his faith broke down again when he saw the disaster coming. He began to doubt his safety even there, became panic stricken and fled on to the bare mountain after all.

One of the party, the wife and mother, could not stand it to lose everything that way, so she broke away and turned back. The fumes of the eruption caught her and strangled her, and her body was found later all covered over with incrustations till it seemed to have become a pillar of salt. The other three reached the little city just as the sun was rising, and as soon as they were safely in the disaster came. The eruption burst forth, and the scorching storm of fire and sulphurous smoke swept down over all the plain, burnt up all the cities and left the whole scene merely a blackened, smoking ruin.

> "Jehovah rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; and overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

Grim, fierce and hopeless! The picture of utter and awful destruction is complete.

The author has one more expedient to heighten the effect—to enable us to visualize the awful ruin. He lets us stand with Abraham on the heights and look down over the vast scene of smoking desolation.

Abraham has been troubled about the fate of Lot. Early in the morning he starts out and climbs up to the heights to see if anything has happened in the Sodom plains below. But he is too late. The eruption had already come and the fire already swept the plain. Everywhere he looked only great volumes of smoke rolled up. The whole plain seemed turned into a great smoking furnace.

V

Such we would expect to be the end of the story. It seems to be disaster complete and final. But the author had more. The physical disaster is complete, but this great physical wreck he follows with a still more dreary moral wreck. Poor old Lot! Not only the riches for which he bartered his place under the covenant, all completely destroyed, his family nearly all dead, but even his character, standing and fair name to go down in equal disaster.

30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. 31 And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: 32 come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the first-born went in, and lay with her father; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37 And the first-born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. 38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

In spite of the promise, afraid to stay in Zoar, he flees with his daughters into the mountains, takes shelter in a cave and cowers there in fright. And equal fright leads his daughters to devise the disgraceful acts of incest, and the last view we have of him is there in infamy and shame recovering from a drunken debauch. And there the author drops him from the story.

This was the author's way of dismissing Lot as a failure, the most pitiable of all his failures. The one "nearest to the kingdom," a kind, amiable, good man, but he refused the one essential thing, and so failed. That is the picture the author intends to make of him, and that is the lesson he means to draw. And we should note that, even outside of the covenant, and even beyond the asking of Abraham, God did everything he could to save him, but through lack of trust he ruined himself.

VI

The next chapter gives an incident very similar to that recorded as occurring in Egypt in chapter twelve. Of course critics who are looking for such things will have no doubt that this is but a variant account from another source of the same occurrence. For our purpose it is not necessary to consider that question. We are only studying the story as it is given to us. The author, whether by copying from two sources, by recording actual facts that occurred or by constructing the whole story himself, has deliberately made Abraham appear as twice in the same kind of a blunder, and doubtless intended all which that would imply.

20 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the land of the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, because of the woman whom thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous nation? 5 Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this. 6 And God said unto him in the dream, Yea, I know that in the integrity of thy heart thou hast done this, and I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7 Now therefore restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou

restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

8 And Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. 12 And moreover she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife: 13 and it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. 14 And Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and men-servants and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. 15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. 16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, it is for thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee; and in respect of all thou art righted. 17 And Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants; and they bare children. 18 For Jehovah had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Perhaps if we will use our imaginations a little we may be able to divine how Abraham's faith might have had a bad slump just at that time, and may see that the author had a distinct reason for inserting a second instance of Abraham's faith failure. And it was a greater fall and failure this time if he had once before had precisely the same experience.

Was Abraham feeling a little blue because his great parley with Jehovah, related in the eighteenth chapter, had ended in failure? God had granted him everything he asked to the very end, but it had not saved Sodom after all, and that meant, as far as he knew, that it had not saved his kinsman Lot.

Also he felt that he had made something of a fool of himself, or worse. He had begun with the implied assumption that Jehovah was perhaps forgetting himself, and likely to blunder into an act of great injustice, and that he had to warn him. "Are you going to slay all the righteous people in that city just to punish some wicked people? Remember that you are judge of all the earth and should be perfectly just." But Jehovah, it turned out, knew far better than he did what to do. His zeal had been entirely misdirected and unnecessary. There apparently had been practically no righteous people at all in the city, and the whole city had been destroyed, and, as far as he knew, Lot with it. And because he had not asked for the safety of Lot instead of trying to discipline Jehovah he had lost all. Lot might have been saved if he had just been more sincere and humble and asked for it.

He had climbed up next morning to the hill top to look down over the plain, and all he could see was just clouds of smoke and hopeless desolation. The horror of it and the sorrow of the supposed loss of his kinsman Lot was too much for him. He could not stay in that region, so he left and went away over southwest, nearer the sea, into more fertile pasturage and into the domain of a rather powerful petty king, Abimelech of Gerar.

His nerves were shaken by the catastrophe, and his feeling of intimacy with Jehovah badly weakened by the memory of the sorry figure he had made of himself in his interview with him. As he had frequently been accustomed (cf. vs. 13) to have Sarah maintain a sort of semi-independent state in the encampment as his sister, he was glad to again let that report of her get out among the people of Gerar, to make his own life more secure.

Just as in the former case, Abimelech, king of Gerar, took her into his court to be his wife, but before she had been dishonored God interfered again, and had her restored to her husband. In this case there was not so much difference of power between Abraham and Abimelech as there had been between him and the king of Egypt, so he is not summarily hustled out of the country as he was before. The king of Gerar is rather himself a little bit afraid of the great, powerful sheik Abraham, and takes pains to keep on good terms. He bestows many presents and gifts to appease any anger he might have and to forestall retaliation.

Note what fearful retaliation did follow a somewhat similar and much less compromising act when Jacob was camped near the petty king Hamor of Shechem. The king's son had taken the unmarried daughter of Jacob, and though he, at great cost, was preparing to honorably marry her yet Jacob's tribesmen were so incensed, and so strong, that they slaughtered all the inhabitants of the whole city in retaliation (chap. 34). Abimelech might easily have felt he had reason for fear.

The purpose of the author in this as in some other incidents manifestly was to emphasize both the necessity and the effectiveness of the personal care and guidance which God was bestowing upon Abraham. Though Abraham was a strong and noble character yet he wants to make it plain that even he failed again and again, and his career might have been as much of a moral failure as Lot's or that of any of the others if it had not been for the special relation that God continued to maintain toward him.

Only after a long career under that special relation was God able to bring him up to that superlative degree of faith and loyalty that we see in his latter days in chapter twenty-two. He wishes to show what Abraham was, that we may appreciate what he became through his relations with God.

God not only reaches out his hand to rescue his people when they slip and fall, but he even makes their faults and failures work out good results under his providence. We already saw that it was so in the case of Abraham's former misconduct about his wife in Egypt. As a result of that he had to leave the country indeed, but he thereby avoided the great danger of being sucked back again into the allurements of a high but corrupt civilization—just the kind of evils from which he had been called out at Ur of the Chaldees. Or on the other hand he escaped the danger of becoming entangled and enslaved there, as his grandson Jacob was when he went there, also to escape a famine, and did not get away for four hundred years.

In this case, however, the conditions were precisely the opposite of what they were before in Egypt. This was a land in which God wished him to stay. It was to be his land. And the result of this incident was to greatly assist his staying there. King Abimelech, to make up with the powerful sheik Abraham for the affront he had given him, besides giving him many rich presents said to him:

"Behold my land is before thee
Dwell where it pleaseth thee."

The settled agriculturist always fears and hates the roving Bedouin. We see signs of their hatred of both Abraham and Isaac, even after this time (chap. 21:25 and 26:15-22). But here he now had at least official permission from the king to dwell there, and a little later (chap. 21:22-34) Abimelech goes in formal state to make a formal treaty with him. It all resulted in Abraham's making from this time on, practically a permanent residence in that vicinity.

He seems to have attached rather a sacred value to the region of Shechem and Bethel where God first promised him the land, and we have record of his visiting it, but he did not ever seem to stay there long, possibly because that part of the country was more thickly settled and the permanent inhabitants made it too unpleasant for him. Most of the remainder of his life from this time on seems to have been spent in this southern region—Hebron, Beersheba and that southern part of the country near Abimelech of Gerar.

VII

The next chapter gives us another of those distressing entanglements that Abraham got into through the false steps that resulted from his lack of faith in God's promise. A false step may trail its painful results a long while after.

21 And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 And Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare unto him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me. 7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age.

8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of

Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, [1]mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son: for the son of this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. 11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son. 12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy handmaid; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the handmaid will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. 14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and *gave her* the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15 And the water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not look upon the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he dwelt in the wilderness, and became, as he grew up, an archer. 21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

Fourteen years have elapsed since that painful family scene had been brought about by the mistake of his relations with Hagar. The matter had been patched up. The boy Ishmael had been born and had grown up to be a fine young lad in the encampment. Undoubtedly old Abraham did develop quite an affection for the fine, active young lad that was his own natural son, though still he had his hope set on a promised son that was to be from his own wife Sarah. This hope was intensified when the definite promise was renewed, as we saw in a late chapter.

At last the son was born, and the hopes of a long lifetime were fulfilled. His faith is at last triumphantly rewarded. To Sarah, however, it was more than triumph and joy beyond words, much more to her, of course, than it was to Abraham. This is the heir, and every event in his growing life must have due recognition. A great feast is made to celebrate the day that he was weaned and began a new status in the family.

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[1] Or, *playing*.

Sarah now again comes into the plot. Let us not be too hard on her. Any of us might have done the same under her circumstances. It is true it was her own fault and mistake that brought it all on her, but that did not make it any easier to bear. She had had to see another woman able to display herself in the encampment as the mother of Abraham's son, and that woman one whom she had long dominated as her slave.

For fourteen years she had had to see this little lad Ishmael accepted in the camp as the son and the probable heir—saw him grow up and develop into a fine, strong, athletic lad, admired by all the tribe, and of course the recipient of many favors and much interest from Abraham himself. At last the day of triumph had come when her own son was born. It was but natural that all the helpless jealousy of the long years should now be turned to vindictive hatred. Any spark could set off the explosion.

> "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian whom she had born to Abraham, mocking."

The word here translated "mocking" possibly ought rather to be translated "playing." She saw him merely playing about, and the mere sight of him set off her anger. On this great day of festival for her son the sight of the other boy was especially painful.

If mocking is the right word the scene can be imagined easily enough. Ishmael knew that he was being supplanted more and more in public notice, and would not feel any too good over it. It is quite common to suppose that Isaac was rather a quiet, puny child in comparison with the strong, athletic Ishmael, and the jealous older boy may very well have got some companions around him and begun making fun of the puny child, and asking why they were all making so much fuss over such an insignificant specimen.

If "playing" is the proper word it is quite sufficient. The very sight of the strong, athletic Ishmael was more than Sarah could stand, especially if her own son was so much weaker and inferior. She simply could not bear to see him around. Her own son must have the whole field to himself, and have no rival. So she went to Abraham and demanded that he be sent away.

> "Cast out this slave and her son,
> For the son of this slave shall not be heir
> With my son, even with Isaac."

We hardly need to be told that:

> "The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight
> on account of his son."

He had no jealousy of the strong young lad, as Sarah had. On the contrary he was his son and esteemed as such. He was loyal to Isaac as the true son of the promise, and intended to make him his heir. At the same time he must have come to have a good deal of affection for the other bright young lad now just at the most interesting age. Now he was reaping in full the fruit of his former weakness of faith and mistake.

It was not very noble in Sarah, though perhaps natural, and it was a most painful trial to Abraham. And yet it was undoubtedly for the best interests of the great enterprise which God was carrying forward that Isaac should remain alone as the sole heir under the intensive training of his specially pledged father and mother and without the influences that the more active and doubtless less godly Ishmael would have exerted in the family. And so God tells Abraham to solve the difficulty by letting Sarah have her way and sending off the boy Ishmael and his mother.

Abraham never hesitates when he is told what to do. It is said:

> "He rose up early in the morning."

He gave to Hagar the ordinary provision for a journey, gave his son Ishmael into her custody and set her free to leave. He liberated her from slavery. There is no indication that he drove her out into the desert or subjected her intentionally to any hardship, but the contrary. There were plenty of places that she might have gone and with the son of the great sheik Abraham as her son she would have received a great welcome. But Egypt was her native country, and she seems to have headed for her old home. She did not seem fully to realize what a great undertaking it was to cross the desert alone, and soon found herself exhausted, her precious supply of water gone and her way lost in the great desert wastes.

Now comes in again the main principle of the author's theme. Ishmael was the son of Abraham. Will God be faithful to his promise to Abraham? The mother can see nothing but certain death before them both. With mother love she seeks a place with a little shade for her boy to lie down and die, goes away out of sight of his misery that she could not relieve, and gives way to despair.

God's promise to Abraham was to befriend him and his children. He recognized that the boy had a valid claim on the promise. So an angel was sent to point out to the mother the way of rescue. She was told to go on again—to take the hand of her boy and lead him on. And when she did so as God directed, it was not long till she came in sight of a well of water—probably the very well of water that she had calculated on finding when she started out but had missed and got lost.

The succeeding details are not given. She probably found people in the oasis around this well, and if she had some scheme in her mind before she got lost she took it up again and followed it now successfully. Their relation to the great Sheik Abraham would enable them to get hospitality wherever they went. She perhaps hoped that her son would find a career in her native land of Egypt, and managed to make him an alliance by marriage with some family there. But he had the Bedouin blood of his father Abraham in his veins, loved the chase, and followed the wild, free life of the deserts. He soon became the sheik of a tribe, and later the ancestor of a great desert nation.

VIII

In the following verses we have an incident rather suggestive of another phase of Abraham's life. He appears here as a prince of ruler, making a treaty with one of the other princes or city kings of the land.

22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: 23 now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my

son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. 24 And Abraham said, I will swear. 25 And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of the well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. 26 And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to-day. 27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and they two made a covenant. 28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? 30 And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them. 32 So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: and Abimelech rose up, and Phicol the captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33 And *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days.

He seems to be staying quite permanently in this south country, on the borders or in the territory of Abimelech of Gerar, one of these city kings. We saw in a previous connection that Abimelech had invited him to do so. As his city was on the edge of the desert he probably made claim to quite a large stretch of this semi-desert grazing country. If his subjects were in the agricultural or semi-agricultural stage of settled residence they would have no love for the more freely wandering bands of Abraham's Bedouin tribe. The farmer fears and hates the thieving bands of Bedouins prowling about the country, and the Bedouin hates the farmer for pre-empting land away from his cattle grazing.

Abraham was a just, generous and peaceable man, but without his knowledge cases of trouble and strife could arise. There had been such quarrels even with the tribesmen of his nephew Lot, how much more with these hostile Canaanites.

The first encounter between Abraham and Abimelech had not been very pleasant, when the trouble about Sarah had occurred. That matter had been quite happily adjusted, and good relations established. Still the situation was rather dangerous. Strife and difficulties were constantly occurring between the servants and herdmen of the two parties that might at any time break out into serious war.

Abimelech felt that he would be safer if he had some formal, oath bound arrangement or treaty with this powerful Bedouin sheik. So he makes a formal visit with his prime minister Phicol, to see if he can arrange a sort of "Locarno agreement" or "Treaty to end war." He pleads that he has always acted in a friendly way toward Abraham, and asks him to pledge himself to be friendly toward him and his descendants.

"According to the kindness that I have done unto thee
Thou shall do unto me."

The desert warrior bands of Abraham would supposedly be the ones from whom the danger of war would be most expected. Abraham readily agrees to make the pledge. But he has also something on his side to present. His treatment by Abimelech's people had not always been quite such kindness as Abimelech had represented. Those people had just recently made a violent attack and taken possession of one of his important wells. He wants that matter adjusted and protection from similar trouble in future, if they are to make a treaty.

A well or place to water his flock is an indispensable thing to the herdsman. The farmer thinks that if he can destroy the wells or seize them and keep the herdmen from using them then the herdmen will have to go off to other distant places to be near water, and so move away from his region. That is what these were after in seizing or destroying the wells. And we see that they still kept at it in spite of what was done now (chap. 26:15).

Abimelech protests entire ignorance of this matter, and doubtless it had been just a riotous act of some of the farmers, with which he had had nothing to do. Anyway a satisfactory understanding was reached and a definite treaty entered into.

We apparently have here an interesting account of the kind of formalities that were used on such occasions. Abraham made a substantial present of sheep and oxen to Abimelech, to show his good will and also to bind the bargain, pledging Abimelech to cease strife on his part and prevent interference with the wells in future. What follows seems to be the technical formality of the bargain. Abraham sets out seven ewe lambs, and Abimelech goes through the formality of repeating the words:

> "What mean these seven ewe lambs that thou has set by themselves?"

Then Abraham repeats the words:

> "These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand that it may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well."

The author doubtless had a special purpose in inserting this account of Abraham's treaty with Abimelech. Since Abraham is to stand as an example of the man conducted by God, he wants him to appear in every aspect as successful and distinguished as possible. A future chapter (chap. 22) will do this on the spiritual side. But he should be shown to be specially successful and prosperous in the political and social domain also.

Several previous incidents in his history have shown him in not a very good light in that respect, for instance his cringing before the king of Egypt and even fearing this king Abimelech. Now the author wishes toward the end to have it appear that he had attained the highest place in that respect also.

Once he was shown as a warrior, successfully meeting and routing the raiding army from one of the strongest nations of the time (chap. 14). Now he lets him be seen here acting as a ruler, and a prince, treating with a king on equal terms, sought out by that king and asked to make the treaty, meeting him on equal terms as a peer, demanding redress of grievances and successfully dictating the terms on which he will treat.

In a word, the author's intention by these incidents was to say that in the social and secular sphere also God's conducting had been efficient and had raised Abraham to the highest place.

CHAPTER XI

Victory

I

IN the next chapter we have what is intended to be the climax of the story of Abraham, and intended to show that on the spiritual side this plan of being "personally conducted" by God was fully and gloriously successful.

Abraham figures as a man of faith, trusting in God. He is introduced as a man whom God told to go out from his home depending on God to lead him and provide for him. But comparatively noble as his record all along has been it has been punctured and marred by a number of failures just along this very line of trust in God. The author's intention is to now show that not only had God fulfilled his part of the covenant by saving Abraham from the disasters that might have resulted from his failures, but God's dealings with him and influence over him had corrected his faults and weaknesses, and in the end developed him to the highest rank as a man of faith and trust.

He shows this by devising a test that will try his faith to the utmost. Only if his trust in God were absolutely perfect would he have been able to do the things that are commanded him to do. He is told to take his beloved son Isaac, kill him and burn him on an altar as a sacrifice.

22 And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. 2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there

for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 3 And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you. 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? 8 And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11 And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. 12 And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided. 15 And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, 17 that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. 19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

Of course this story is most confidently attacked by critics. They say that it is unreasonable and could not be real fact. God certainly would never have commanded anyone to do a thing of that kind. It must have merely some metaphorical or symbolic meaning.

One favorite way to account for it is to consider it a myth, intended to mean that before this time it had been common for men to offer human sacrifices, but at this time they began to see that human sacrifices were not acceptable to God and began to substitute animals instead, and that is the real meaning of the story. Or it means that here for the first time in some way God showed men that they should stop offering human sacrifices, and that was made up into this story.

For the purposes of our interpretation it makes little difference whether this was a historical fact or a made-up story, but even if a made-up story such an interpretation seems very artificial and far fetched. Much more plausible to suppose it a story just intended to glorify their great hero Abraham. That is one of the most common origins of such stories. We do that even now to glorify our heroes. Even in the full light of modern history and publicity we make up just such folk-lore stories to glorify our heroes now, for instance that one about our hero Washington and his encounter with the cherry tree.

No one thinks it is necessary to make up some far-fetched interpretation as a myth, to account for that cherry-tree story. No one thinks it is necessary to suppose that before that time it was customary for all little boys to cut down cherry trees, and then for the first time it began to be considered a breach of filial etiquette to cut them down, or perhaps that that was the beginning of the custom of all small boys telling the truth when their fathers accused them of mischief.

It is the most natural and expected thing that stories glorifying such a hero as Abraham, both true and false, should become current. This is a story that perfectly fits his character and his place among the ideals of his people. He always figures as the ideal of faith, and as a supreme test of faith and trust it would be hard to imagine a story to excel the one given here.

This story is no reflection on the character of God that he should have given such a command. He never intended that Abraham should kill his son, as we see in the end. It was all merely a test. Would Abraham have sufficient faith and loyalty to God to obey even such a command? Nor was it a test to enable God to find that out. He knew perfectly from the beginning. The only purpose of it all was to show to the world the wonderful faith which God knew that Abraham had. It was therefore a great kindness to Abraham, even though the ordeal was severe. If a trainer knows he has an athlete that can do some marvelous feat it is a favor to him to get him entered in some track meet where, even though it cost him exhausting and painful effort, he can perform that feat. That is what God did for Abraham here.

Do we say that, in any case the idea of offering a son in sacrifice is too horrible for any reasonable person to even suggest it? No one could possibly make such a suggestion? Wait a minute. It has been done. Right in our own day, in the full blaze of our Christian civilization, it has been done—done not once but many times. Hundreds of even our American fathers have had that same command come to them:

> "Take now thy son, thine only son George—or
> John—whom thou lovest, and offer him up for
> a sacrifice *on the fields of France.*"

No angel has interposed to save, and the sacrifice in this case has been performed in all its bloody reality.

Remember that this was four thousand years ago. Such human sacrifices were by no means unknown then. We devoutly hope that four thousand years in the future when people look back to our customs, it will seem as impossible and horrible to them that anyone should thus offer his son to death on the altar of war in this twentieth century, as it now seems to us that any man should offer a human sacrifice four thousand years ago. At any rate we have no right to criticize the reasonableness of this story or of Abraham's test.

II

It is the end of the course, and Abraham is to have his "Final Examination." It is interesting to notice that God gives him his examination tests on just the subjects that he had been over in his course, just the points in which his weakness had been shown. And in all those points Abraham now passes a perfect examination.

He had failed at first when God said to him, "Go out to the land that I shall show thee." His faith got weak and he stopped at Haran. Now again God tells him to go to a place that he will show him, and though it must have been a terribly painful three days' journey he went till God told him to stop.

His faith in God's promise had weakened and he had become so afraid that he would not get a son, that he made the false step of taking the concubine Hagar, and got into a whole lot of trouble. Now he is told to go and kill that very son, and with supreme trust in God now he goes right forth to do it.

Again both in Egypt and in Gerar, from lack of trust he had been so anxious to save his own life that he got into the sin and shame of debauching his wife. Now he is told, not exactly to lose his life, but with his own hands to destroy a life that was far dearer to him than his own, and he goes right on to do it without any question. All his lessons had been learned, and he could pass a perfect examination.

Note how the very form of the command seems to have been made purposely as trying as possible.

> "Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest
> Even Isaac
> And get thee into the land of Moriah
> And offer him there for a burnt offering
> Upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of."

The intense longing of Abraham all his life had been for a son, and now, when at last, by a miracle in his old age, he has a son, that son is to be lost again. And the author piles up words and expressions to make it as distressing as he could.

"Thine only son." Ishmael had been disallowed and disinherited, and all his hopes were in this son.

"Whom thou lovest." Why does he take pains to stress that to make it harder to bear?

"Even Isaac." The very mention of the name would add a pang.

"Get thee into the land of Moriah." If death was to come to his son it would be an added sorrow to be away in a far region among strangers.

And such a death! "Offer him there for a burnt offering." He was to be killed by his father's own hands, and even so not laid peacefully away in a tomb, but his body burned with fire on an altar.

There is one more condition. The essential feature all through his career was his being daily guided by God and trusting to that guidance. That was the condition on which he entered on this career—"went forth not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). So now that same condition was to be in his final test. He was not even told where he was to go, but it was to be "On one of the mountains that I will tell thee of." And three long days he went steadily on—three days of intense agony, yet never wavering—before God at last showed him the place where he was to stop.

III

There was the test, clear and distinct, and difficult as ingenuity could devise. What did Abraham do with it? How did he stand this final examination? The answer that our author means to give to us is that he passed with a 100% grade, a perfect examination.

It would have been very easy for Abraham to have dodged the issue. He might have reasoned, "God does not really intend for me to kill this son," and so might easily have acted so as to allow circumstances beyond his control to arise that would prevent his doing the deed—just help God out a little. In this way he could say that he had obeyed God by his will as far as he was able, and yet he would have his son left to him.

For instance, he might have loitered and delayed his starting till his purpose became known, and then his tribesmen would have forcibly come to the rescue of the child and prevented him from killing him, as was done in the case of Jonathan when Saul proposed, according to his oath, to kill him (I Sam. 14:45).

But he was not going to fall before any subterfuge of that kind. He "rose up early in the morning" before any opposition had time to form. He took an ass for the burdens and only two men, enough for his needs but not enough to interfere with his acts. Then, to prevent failure, he even prepared the wood and fire for the burning, and took it all along the way.

It was a long journey of three days, and Abraham had all that time to bear the agony of the fearful thing he was going to do, and all that time for his faith to weaken or to try to find some way to escape. When at last he arrives at the place he takes one more precaution and leaves the two servants behind with the asses while he and the little boy go on alone to the place where the awful deed is to be done.

On the way up the mountain the hardest trial of all comes. The little boy, running along prattling by his father's side, looks up wonderingly into his face and says, "Why, papa, here is the fire and the wood, and you are going to offer a sacrifice, but where is the lamb?" How could he answer him? Could he tell him that he was going to kill him and burn him for a lamb on the altar? All he could say was, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

This did not mean that he expected God to give him a substitute lamb and save the boy—as God really did. The movement of the story unmistakably indicates that Abraham had no other thought but that he was going to kill and offer the boy, and he actually did go clear up to the physical impulse of the act of doing it. It was a cryptic answer, the best he could make to the trusting child. "There is going to be a lamb to offer, the lamb that God has directed me to offer."

IV

We all remember the rest of the story. They went on to the top of the mountain and when they came to the place, Abraham goes gravely to the performance of his awful task. He builds up the altar, arranges the wood on it all ready to kindle. Then—can we visualize the scene and the terrible agony of the father?—he takes hold of his little boy and ties his hands and feet so he cannot resist and lays him on the top of the wood to be burned on the altar. He takes the knife and has really begun the stroke that is to take the little boy's life. Just at that instant he is startled and the stroke stopped by the voice of the angel of Jehovah out of heaven:

"Lay not thy hand upon the lad."

But the test has been complete. To the very act, to the actual beginning of the stroke of death Abraham has followed without faltering the directions of God. As far as the impulse of his will was concerned he has done the deed. It would have added nothing more to the test if he had gone on and finished the stroke. So God stopped it just at the instant without any harm to the boy, as of course from the beginning he intended to do. The boy is unbound, a ram is provided and a sacrifice is performed in regular order, and all returned happy to their home once more.

This test was Abraham's "Final Examination," and having passed it successfully we might expect God to give him a diploma. This he did, in the form of the special promise and blessing that follow. God had given him words of promise before. He had given him certificates of promotion from time to time when he had finished some lesson—some act of trust or nobility—as for instance when he first followed God's lead to the land of Canaan (chap. 12:7), or when he generously gave the choice of the land to Lot (chap. 13:14-18). But now he gives him something more, a diploma with the great official seal stamped on it. As the author of Hebrews says (6:17), "He confirmed it with an oath." This is something we find nowhere else in God's dealings with him. It is the great official seal stamped upon the diploma of his graduation.

> "By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah
> Because thou hast done this thing
> And hast not withheld thy son, thine only son,
> That in blessing I will bless thee
> And in multiplying I will multiply thy seed
> As the stars of the heaven and as the
> sand which is upon the sea shore."

V

Our author is very systematic and punctilious. He takes care to never leave any loose strings dangling. If any family has come into the story he takes some means of dismissing it courteously, usually by inserting a line of genealogy of the descendants of the family. We have seen that already with Cain, with the other sons of Noah and part of the line of Shem, and we will see it later with both Ishmael and Esau. Here he pays this courteous respect to Nahor, the brother of Abraham. He does it by giving in a short paragraph a list of his children and some of his grandchildren, incidentally including in the list one, Rebekah, who is again to come into the story as the wife of Isaac.

20 And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also hath borne children unto thy brother Nahor: 21 Uz his first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 and Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. 23 And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight did Milcah bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. 24 And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she also bare Tebah, and Gaham, and Tahash, and Maacah.

CHAPTER XII

Eventide

I

"Sarah died in Kiriath Arba (the same is
Hebron) in the land of Canaan.
And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah
and to weep for her."

WITH the supreme test in chapter twenty-two, the problem of Abraham is practically completed, and the actors may now, one by one, begin to be retired. The first is Sarah, whose death is recorded in chapter twenty-three. Her age is given as one hundred and twenty-seven, which, if we attach importance to these figures, would seem to make the date just two or three years before the marriage of Isaac recorded in the next chapter.

23 And the life of Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years: these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. 3 And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spake unto the children of Heth, saying, 4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. 5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, 6 Hear us, my lord; thou art a prince of God among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. 7 And Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. 8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in the midst of you

for a possession of a burying-place. 10 Now Ephron was sitting in the midst of the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the children of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. 12 And Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land. 13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt, I pray thee, hear me: I will give the price of the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. 14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, 15 My lord, hearken unto me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. 16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current *money* with the merchant.

17 So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round about, were made sure 18 unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. 19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan. 20 And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the children of Heth.

This twenty-third chapter looks to be perfectly simple and commonplace, just the account of Abraham burying his wife. But in some respects it is capable of appearing one of the most interesting and intriguing in the whole book. There are at least four different, independent lines of interest combined in it.

In the first place it is an interesting little picture of ancient oriental commercial custom, the process and procedure in buying a piece of land. We have found a great many similar records of little private business transactions among the tablets dug up in the ancient ruins, and they all have a very human interest. We have here the transaction with the elders at the gate, the bargain merely certified by the presence of witnesses, and at the end what we may take for probably almost the very words of the formal contract describing and locating the property as we would in our deeds. We note the feature that it was not enough to specify only the land, but the cave also and even the trees on the land and on the borders must all be mentioned or they would not be included in the transfer.

In the second place, this is ostensibly the account of the burial of Sarah. The author is doing honor to the great ancestress Sarah by devoting a whole chapter to the account of her funeral. But if we stop to examine a little we see that really almost the whole of the chapter is occupied with the buying of the land. The burial of Sarah is itself buried in a real-estate transaction.

II

In the next place we may notice that what he has given us here might be characterized as the story of "How a Jew was outwitted in a business transaction." Do some people claim that the Hebrew writers had no sense of humor?

His wife Sarah had died, and Abraham must have a burial place, some piece of land that he had a legal title to and could always control. By custom or law he had the right to pasture his flocks and pitch his tents anywhere he found vacant land, but as soon as he was off it all control or relation ceased. For a burial place he wanted something permanently his own. So now he goes about to get it.

As a sheik or prince he would naturally go to persons of his own rank to deal. It was not certain that they would grant his request. The settled agriculturist hates the

Bedouin, and though he may tolerate him temporarily would not relish anything that might bring him back frequently. In ancient times any stranger was an object of suspicion and hatred. Abraham plainly states to them:

"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

He was not only a stranger, but he had no intention of becoming permanently united with them. He was only a sojourner.

His request is cordially granted by the city chiefs. Whether it was only real respect, as they said, or also the hope that he would settle down and add his wealth to their commonwealth, they agreed to his request, and in the characteristic way still common in the East, offered to give him such a place free of cost, any place that he should wish. So far so good. He would not be driven away as a stranger. The first round in the contest goes to Abraham.

Of course he would not accept it as a gift, and put himself under obligation to them, even if they had intended to give it. So he must begin his bargaining. Not only would it be the conventional procedure for a man of his rank to deal only with the Hebron princes and have them make the bargain for him, but it would be very much to his advantage and profit to do so. They as hosts or agents would be in honor bound to make the best bargain they could for their guest, and dealing with their own townsmen they could easily force them to make a bargain favorable to their client.

Abraham had fully prepared himself and picked out just the piece of land he wanted to buy. So he says to them, "Since you are so kind as to grant my request, please go to Ephron the Hittite, and buy for me his field with the cave in it. I will pay him generously for it, and I will consider it a great favor if you will buy it for me." He is dealing with men of his own rank and class, has told them what he wants, and has a right to expect them to get it for him on favorable terms.

But unfortunately his plans met a snag. For Ephron himself happened to be right there in the crowd. He did not at all fancy the way matters were going. If he had to deal with the elders of the city as the advocates of Abraham he would have to sell the land at any low price at which it might be appraised by them, and then might not get all the sale money. He must find some way to himself make the deal direct with Abraham, and then he could at least haggle for a fair price. But how could he manage to do it? Abraham had not asked him to sell the land, was not dealing with him, so how could he drive a bargain with him?

He knew what to do. He could not offer to sell the land directly to Abraham. It would be a breach of etiquette. But there could be no possible objection to his making him a present of it. So he jumps up and says to Abraham, "Don't trouble the elders of the city about it. I will make you a present of the land. If it is something that will be useful to you I will be only too happy to make you a present of it. Here now I formally give it to you before all these witnesses."

It might look to a modern occidental mind as though everything was still all going in favor of Abraham, but in reality this round was emphatically in favor of Ephron. He knew that there was not any possibility that Abraham would accept it as a gift. But now he had brought about that he, Ephron, must be dealt with by Abraham directly as a principal in the transaction. And as we have seen, Abraham had already committed himself to buy the field.

Abraham of course saw this, so he immediately began his formal bargaining with Ephron for the field, as before calling the elders in the gate to witness. "I am very glad that you are willing to do me the favor. Of course I could not take it as a gift, but please tell me the price of the field, and I will buy it."

Now if Ephron had put a price on the field to sell it, and given his reasons why that was a very low price, as ordinarily a dealer would, Abraham could easily have found some courteous way to show that there was some mistake and the price was too high, and named a price about a fourth or a fifth as much as reasonable, and then they would begin the game of oriental buying. But Ephron was too wise for that.

"Oh no! I would not think of doing that with such a trifling thing—a little piece of land worth only four hundred shekels of silver. That is not worth considering. With such a person as you I would much rather give you the land as a gift. Please take it and bury your dead."

Abraham saw that he was fairly caught. There was nothing that he could possibly do. Ephron had not made him an offer at a price to be a basis for bargaining. Still he had distinctly declared what he considered it worth, and Abraham had committed himself to buying that land before the elders. So there was nothing more he could say or do. He just accepted the terms, paid the money and bought the land at that price.

Now if we turn over to II Sam. 24:24, we see that King David, a thousand years later when prices would supposedly be many times higher, for all things, bought a similar piece of land right close to his capital, the great city of Jerusalem, for only fifty shekels, with a yoke of oxen thrown in. Still a thousand years later, in Christ's time, the Potter's Field was bought for thirty shekels (Matt. 27:7), (cf. also Gen. 33:19). So it is quite probable that Ephron did not make a great sacrifice in selling his field for four hundred shekels of silver (see p. 288).

III

There is one more possible thought suggested in the chapter. In the second verse it is reported:

"Abraham *came* to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her."

What is the intention of that word "came."

We have had this far a quite serious discussion of the lives of Abraham and others. May we be excused if we stop at this point to just day-dream a little.

Did Abraham and his wife Sarah become estranged and separate? It probably seems almost sacrilegious to even suggest such a thought. But these old Bible heroes must be thought of as only flesh and blood, leading common, everyday lives, meeting the same kind of troubles in the same way as all the rest of us. It will add just a touch of realism to at least ask the question.

Professor Ramsey claims of the author of Acts, that he was a special master of technique, and often meant to express a whole wide range of facts by just some little turn in an expression, as for instance by introducing the word "we" into the narrative at one point, or by changing the order of words from "Barnabas and Saul" to "Paul and Barnabas." I believe the same may be said of this author, as we have had occasion several times to suspect.

Why does he say here, "Abraham *came* to mourn for Sarah"? Let us go back a little and indulge in the pleasant pastime of reading between the lines.

We have seen from the start that Sarah was a person of importance that had to be separately mentioned when Abraham makes a move. She was a kinswoman that possibly he married for state reasons. If she was the sister of Lot it would be easy to make up a story. There does not seem to have been any extraordinary conjugal affection between them or he would not have been so complacently ready to let her be taken by another man, both in Egypt and in Gerar, nor she so willing to go. And we may suppose too that she did not feel very much flattered by the readiness with which Abraham was willing to let Pharaoh or Abimelech take her away as a wife.

We can easily imagine her insisting on surrounding herself with a certain amount of independent state and importance, which Abraham would not really resent but still which would not tend to draw closer the relations between them.

Then came that most unfortunate series of incidents with Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham, though jointly to blame, would not be human if he did not hold some grudge against Sarah for making the suggestion and starting all the trouble. On Sarah's part, she doubtless blamed Abraham, and probably not without reason, for the airs which her slave Hagar put on toward her on account of her relations to Abraham.

All the time that the fine lad Ishmael was growing up as the prospective heir, yet with no relation to her, unquestionably jealousy and hatred were rankling in her heart. After her own son Isaac was born, and the other rival was still on the scene, her hate and jealousy came to the exploding point, and she made the peremptory demand that he be sent away.

We have already seen how that must rouse hard feelings between her husband and herself. Ishmael was his son and there was as much reason that he would be dear to him as hated by his wife. Against all his feelings he was compelled to send Ishmael away, and, although he consented to it by the direction of God, yet he could not fail to lay it up as a deep source of grudge against his wife.

The jealousy of Sarah would be somewhat appeased when Ishmael was thus sent away, but the fires would kindle again and possibly burn even hotter than before when she saw that her husband was still keeping in touch with the distant Ishmael and showing favors to him. That he really did so is clearly indicated by the fact that at his death the record says that both Isaac and Ishmael took part in his burial. There is record of a number of other "natural sons," but it is only Ishmael that thus takes part.

The author has too much respect for our intelligence to think he needed to tell us that Isaac was a "mother's pet" and grew up tied to his mother's apron strings. If he was a comparatively weak and timid child—a child of old age is apt to be so, and his after history confirms the thought—his mother would the more feel that she must coddle him and do everything for him, and the more she did the less he would learn to do for himself.

Though the father had promised that he should be the heir, yet he was still keeping up clandestine relations with his first-loved Ishmael. How did she know but, if she should die, Abraham might change back and make Ishmael the heir again. She wished to take no chances, so she got Abraham to practically turn over the control of the whole estate to Isaac while they were all still living (cf. chaps. 24:36; 25:5).

But how could Isaac really take control and manage the estate while his father was still living—such a weak man and such a strong, revered father? We will soon see how Laban, a strong, domineering son of a weak father, could easily overshadow his father and prematurely take his authority and place. Even Abraham seems to have been a stronger character than his father Terah. But Isaac's case was just the opposite, and especially with such a father as Abraham. Even though formally made the head of the tribe there was no possibility of such a diffident, weak man as he exercising any real authority as long as his strong, illustrious father was near. He could only get into real control and possession by taking the tribe and encampment away off somewhere and being alone.

But even then, how could Isaac manage such a great estate alone? He had never done anything alone in all his life. His mother had always been there to do everything and superintend everything for him. Much more now that he had the whole estate and tribe to care for he could not get along without her. So since he must go off somewhere away from his father where he could really be chief, of course she must go with him.

He apparently moved to Hebron, and his mother went with him and made her home with him from that time till her death, and the poor old patriarch Abraham was left alone back at Beersheba, with just a few of the oldest and most loyal servants who had been longest with him in his service. So later, when one of those old trusted retainers goes off to Padan Aram to get a wife for young Isaac, it is the lonely old man anxious for the welfare of his absent son that sends him. And when he comes back with the bride it is not to Abraham but to the equally lonely Isaac away off there by himself.

His mother had died there in Hebron. With the primitive aversion for the scenes of death, he had removed down south to Beer-la-ha-roi, and yet he still kept his mother's tent intact as she had left it (chap. 24:67), and three years later was still grieving for her, only to be comforted by the coming of his wife Rebekah, who by the way was going to overshadow and boss him just as his mother had done.

And thus we see how it was that when Sarah died there in the encampment with her son Isaac in Hebron (chap. 32:2), Abraham, left alone at the old encampment in Beersheba (chap. 22:19) had to "come" to mourn and to weep for her.

CHAPTER XIII

Isaac

I

SO much for our day dreams. We may go back again to more sober narrative, and to the old patriarch Abraham, now walking in the quiet sunset of life, with a few old, trusted retainers about him, and his heart ever going out to his son who had gone away from him to assume the responsibilities of life. He knew the weaknesses of that son and the dangers of life. The greatest danger was that with his weak complaisance he should settle down and become intermarried, amalgamated and swallowed up among the inhabitants of this land, and thus all for which the father Abraham had given up his homeland and lived a life of separation and faith, would be lost.

One more safeguard he must accomplish. He must see that Isaac has a wife, and that he shall not marry among the people of this land to become one with them. He must get him a wife from among his own kindred, imbued with some measure of the spirit that had brought him out on his life quest, willing to maintain the same separateness from the people of the land that he had, and also loyal to Jehovah his God.

This story in chapter twenty-four is another fine piece of narrative writing. The story is written a little prolix perhaps and repetitious, but no more than the staid old man would be, and so it is true to nature.

24 And Abraham was old, *and* well stricken in age: and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said unto his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3 and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou wilt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: 4 but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac. 5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? 6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. 7 Jehovah, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity, and who spake unto me, and who sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence. 8 And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only thou shalt not bring my son thither again. 9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning this matter.

10 And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed, having all goodly things of his master's in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. 11 And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water. 12 And he said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. 13 Behold I am standing by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water: 14 and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master. 15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. 16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. 17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher. 18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. 19 And when she had done giving him

drink, she said, I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. 20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. 21 And the man looked stedfastly on her, holding his peace, to know whether Jehovah had made his journey prosperous or not. 22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, 23 and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? 24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bare unto Nahor. 25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. 26 And the man bowed his head, and worshipped Jehovah. 27 And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his lovingkindness and his truth toward my master: as for me, Jehovah hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran, and told her mother's house according to these words. 29 And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the fountain. 30 And it came to pass, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he was standing by the camels at the fountain. 31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. 32 And the man came into the house, and he ungirded the camels; and he gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men that were with him. 33 And there was set food before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. 34 And he said, I am Abraham's servant. 35 and Jehovah hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. 37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: 38 But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son. 39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. 40 And he said unto me, Jehovah, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's

house: 41 then shalt thou be clear from my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give her not to thee, thou shalt be clear from my oath. 42 And I came this day unto the fountain, and said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go; 43 behold, I am standing by the fountain of water; and let it come to pass, that the maiden that cometh forth to draw, to whom I shall say, Give me, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher to drink; 44 and she shall say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom Jehovah hath appointed for my master's son. 45 And before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the fountain, and drew: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. 46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. 47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ring upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands. 48 And I bowed my head, and worshipped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. 49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. 51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken. 52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah. 53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. 54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. 55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us *a few* days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. 56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. 57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. 58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. 59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Our

sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of ten thousands, and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them.

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. 62 And Isaac came from the way of Beer-lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the land of the South. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel. 65 And she said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master: and she took her veil, and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Abraham sends a caravan back to the city of Haran to find a wife for his son among his relatives there. He puts it under the direction of a faithful old retainer who had long been the overseer of his house. He was one whom he believed he could trust for such an important mission, yet he takes the precaution by the most binding ceremony of an oath, to pledge him to faithfully carry out the commission.

He was, first, to arrange and secure for Isaac a marriage with some member of his own ancestral tribe back in Mesopotamia, and, second, to make sure that this wife should come out here to his son and the son not be compelled to give up Jehovah's leading and go back again to the home country.

Nominally Abraham had made over everything to the possession of Isaac, but he still had enough left that he could fit out an imposing caravan and furnish his envoy with princely presents to give to the bride and her family. For we must remember that Abraham had been a real prince.

We can see the old man and his retinue of servants, with their line of camels, pad, pad, padding along over the sand day after day, on the long journey, silent, solemn and faithful. At last he reaches the city of his quest. But that is only the easiest part of his task. Haran was a great populous city. His commission is very important. Somewhere in that great city he must find just the right one, suited in every way to be the wife of his great master's son.

How shall he proceed? Abraham his master had now come to have perfect faith, trusting everything to God's leading. He also would have that same trust and let God direct and decide for him. He would use the plan that all simple-minded people tend to use for that purpose. He arranged as a sign, something to do, and agreed that the first one that came and did just that thing he would accept as the one God wanted him to take. He was a pretty astute old man, and we may notice that any person who would volunteer to do all that he laid out would be quite sure to be a pretty superior sort of person.

He had hardly done making his plan when Rebekah was seen coming to the well. He did his part as he had arranged in his plan, by asking for a drink of water, just as any thirsty traveler would be likely to do. Rebekah responded and went through just the course that he had laid out in his test. She took down her pitcher of water off her shoulder and held it carefully while he took a drink, and then she insisted on drawing water and watering all his camels also. Anyone who knows how much a thirsty camel just in from the desert will drink, will appreciate that it was no small job to draw and carry enough water to satisfy ten thirsty camels.

She had done just what his test called for. He would be like his master Abraham and not let any doubt come between him and God. Since his test had been so remarkably fulfilled he believed God had pointed out the person he came for. So without waiting to ask who she was, or anything about her, he immediately brought out a lot of magnificent gold jewelry worth a small fortune, and gave it to her. And then he asked who she was, and if he could go and be received at her father's house.

When her answer came he saw that he had not been mistaken in trusting God for direction. This is just the very person of all possible ones that would most fully be all that his master Abraham wished in the wife for his son.

> "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah
> whom she bare to Nahor."

Nahor was the brother of Abraham, so he felt he could not have gotten one from a better family. She said they had plenty of everything for entertaining him, and gave him a cordial invitation to be their guest. He saw that his quest was ended, safely and gloriously ended, so he bowed his head and gave thanks to Jehovah who had guided him so well.

II

Now the story runs on merrily. Rebekah runs home and tells of the wonderful man she has met at the well and they all run out to see him. We will probably notice that Laban's steps were quite appreciably hastened by the sight of the rich gold jewelry on his sister's nose and arms. We will see more of this Laban later.

The servant is still standing there by the well, and Laban is most effusive in his invitation to come in to his house.

"Come in thou blessed of Jehovah
Wherefore standest thou without?"

The gold ring and bracelets were sufficient evidence to him that this man was "Blessed of Jehovah." At any rate he prepared royally for the camels and for the servants with them, and then led the old steward into the house and prepared a feast for him.

But he—honest, matter-of-fact old man—held back. He must fulfil his task before he could sit down to eat. The code of the desert was pretty definite and he felt that if he had accepted the hospitality and eaten he would be committed as a guest to Laban and somewhat handicapped as to what he might say and do. So he insisted that he must have the matter for which he had come settled before he would commit himself as a guest and eat.

With the characteristic discursiveness of an old man he tells the whole story of God's dealings with Abraham, Abraham's desire for a suitable wife for his son Isaac, and the way he had been led at the well to believe that Rebekah was the one Jehovah had chosen for that wife. He does not omit in his account to mention to them how very rich Abraham was, and also that he had already made over all those possessions to this son Isaac. And he ends by saying, "The question is, will you give her to me or will you not? I must have the matter settled before we go any farther, that I may know whether to stay or to turn and go back home."

You will notice, in verse eighteen, that Abraham had expressly stipulated that when he found the proper woman, if she was not willing to come back with him he was to call the whole matter off and come home. He is sure he has found the right woman, so he puts it distinctly up to them. "Can I take this woman back with me or can

I not? If not, there is nothing more for me to do but to say good-bye and start on back again." Pretty dry, blunt, straightforward sort of a man he, but that kind of a man you can trust for such an important post as he held. We will see the same kind of a man in evidence again a little later.

A family council was held and an affirmative answer given him.

"Behold Rebekah is before thee
Take her and go."

Their assent was unanimous and emphatic.

"The thing proceedeth from Jehovah
We can not speak unto thee good or bad."

We may notice that this is the only place in the whole story where Bethuel the father is made to appear. It would look as though he was superannuated or retired like Abraham, and Laban had taken the place as head of the family. But in a case of this kind, involving the marriage of one of the family, the consent of the father was still vital, and he must be called into the conference.

Now the matter was all positively settled and the old servant could relax. He brought forth princely presents of gold and silver and raiment for the bride-elect, and also suitable gifts and presents to her mother and to Laban, and then they all sat down to the feast and celebrated the event right royally.

But the next morning the dry, blunt, matter-of-fact envoy and faithful old servant is to the front again. His task is all done, his mission ended, and he must get right away back home again.

"Send me away to my master."

To the mother and brother that seemed unreasonable.

And it was unreasonable. How could he ask a young girl at a moment's notice to go away from her home, in all likelihood never to revisit it or see her family and friends again. "Stay with us and let the girl have a few days to prepare for going away, and to say good-bye to her family and friends."

But you cannot budge an old man of that character from a determination he has once taken.

"Hinder me not. Jehovah is leading me and I must go right back to my master."

It was of no use to object. All they could do was to say, "We will leave it to Rebekah herself to decide." So they call her and say, "The man says you must start right off with him at once. How about it? Will you go?"

Now what do you think Rebekah will say? It surely was a pretty big thing to ask a young girl. She might very well say it was "so sudden." She is asked to permanently leave her home and all that thus far had been her life, and immediately go away out into the unknown. Could any young girl be expected to consent to that?

But wait a bit. There was her brother Laban. She could probably be happy in the home as long as her father was at the head. But her brother Laban had managed to elbow his father out and was assuming supreme control. Now Rebekah had somewhat of a managing, domineering disposition herself. He was only a brother, yet he had managed to get control over the family affairs, and so control over her.

You can easily work out the rest of the story yourselves. Remember that because they were Bible characters they were not necessarily passionless angels but just flesh and blood humans like ourselves. It would not be the first, or last, time that young folks have felt their home only a place to get away from. Much more attractive to be the wife of a rich "Prince Charming" in a far country than the slave of a nagging brother at home. So you are not so very much surprised when you hear her answer come out without any hesitation, clear and strong:

"I will go."

There was nothing more to be said. Soon they were off —Rebekah with her nurse and a suitable number of female attendants—and the long journey was begun. Day after day they tramped steadily on, back through the long caravan route, down to Canaan and on to the encampments of Isaac at the edge of the desert in the south.

As they were nearing their destination, one evening Rebekah sees a distinguished looking man in the distance, who looks as though he was standing waiting for them. She brings her camel alongside of the old servant to ask, and he tells her it is his master's son Isaac. She immediately alights from her camel and makes preparation to meet him with the decorum that oriental etiquette prescribed.

Isaac had been very lonely since the death of his mother, and was out in the fields by himself walking up and down when he saw the caravan coming. He hastened to meet them and welcome them, and the long journey was happily ended.

With him it was a case of "love at first sight." They were married and he installed her in the magnificent tent and retinue that so long had been his mother's, and she was not long in installing herself in the place that had also been his mother's, of boss and manager of his life.

III

The heart of an old man is with his children and their welfare. Now that his son Isaac is so happily and so safely provided for, Abraham may end his days in peace. Trustfully walking with the God who had so long and so familiarly walked with him, he could now serenely face toward the glories of the sunset of life.

Before he leaves the stage the author thinks it but fair to tell us that what has been recorded is only part of his life history. He really has been, for the most part, a normal man of his time. Like any other desert chieftain he had had a large establishment, with other wives and concubines, and a number of other "natural sons" for whom he suitably provided, and who became the leaders or ancestors of tribes of considerable importance.

25 And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. 4 And the sons of Midian: Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. 7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8 And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full *of years,* and was gathered to his people. 9 And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10 the field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son: and Isaac dwelt by Beer-lahai-roi.

12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: 13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the first-born of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and Kedar,

and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 14 and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, 15 Hadad, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16 these are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their villages, and by their encampments; twelve princes according to their nation. 17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people. 18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: he abode over against all his brethren.

Though there were, as we see, these other sons of the inferior wives, Isaac was the only son of his legitimate wife, Sarah, and the only one that he acknowledged for the full succession. The other sons were all fairly provided for, and to secure the succession to Isaac he was made the head of the tribe during the lifetime of his father, and all the vast estate, as we have seen, put in his possession.

We have also noted that Ishmael had some way all along been quietly receiving such special treatment and favors from his father that he retained a warm filial feeling in spite of his banishment, and when the old patriarch dies he comes and joins with Isaac in the funeral ceremonies.

Abraham dies in a good old age, and his body is laid away in the cave in the field that he had bought with so much ceremony for the burial of his wife. That cave is still identified by the Arabs of the neighborhood, and as it is kept closely sealed and sacredly guarded there is no way to disprove the belief of the Arabs that the body of their great ancestor and the ancestor of the Jews is still there intact.

The author seems to share our own sympathy for the rather mistreated Ishmael, and feels that he also ought to be given a courteous dismissal. This he does by his characteristic expedient of giving an account of his descendants and their countries, with an account of the good old age at which Ishmael himself died. A whole section is devoted to this account, beginning with the customary title:

"These are the generations of Ishmael."

IV

The next section is headed:

"These are the generations of Isaac."

But as is true of nearly all the other sections, the name that appears in the title is not the chief subject of the section. There is, it is true, considerable mention made of Isaac at the start, but the greater part of the section is taken up with the doings of Jacob and his sons. Similarly the next section, headed "The generations of Jacob," has not much left to say about Jacob so is chiefly the story of Joseph.

19 And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife. 21 And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she was barren: and Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, wherefore do I live? And she went to inquire of Jehovah. 23 And Jehovah said unto her,

Two nations are in thy womb,
And two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels:
And the one people shall be stronger than the other people;
And the elder shall serve the younger.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26 And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

Isaac, like his father Abraham, had the grief of being a long while childless. As far as the record goes it would appear that Rebekah took care that he did not have any other wives. After twenty years of fruitless hopes at last Jehovah answered his prayers and he had a son—indeed two of them. This seems to have been one too many for comfort, for the strife between them began even before they were born. And the Oracle said that this was typical of strife that should always be between them and between their descendants. And it also gave the intimation that the younger, Jacob, should win the superior place.

Isaac is the second of the men the author is putting forth to illustrate his claim that to be personally conducted by God will bring success. He is a very different man from his father Abraham, and so he illustrates the author's claim in an entirely different field.

Abraham was the typical strong man and man of faith. He illustrates the fact that the strong leader, the man of progress and initiative, will be saved from disaster, will win true greatness and far higher success if he submits his life to be conducted by God.

Isaac was in many respects just the reverse. He was a meek, unassuming, unaggressive man. He never was asked to go out into new lands, he was born in the land of promise. He was not asked to give up his home but to cling to it. He was not required to break with the religion of his home town and go off to practice a separate religion, he was surrounded with the influence of Jehovah worship from infancy. His piety was drilled into him by others. He lived a sheltered life, always very much under the influence of those around him, and in this case fortunately that influence was always for good.

He represents the great mass of common people living in moral, Christian communities today. They are surrounded by "their sisters and their cousins and their aunts," and so they lead exemplary, creditable lives. It is a good thing for them that they do, and that is God's way of bringing it about that they shall be good, even if it is no great conspicuous credit to them that they are good. It is not so important that every man should be a conspicuous hero as it is that men and society should be moral, clean and safe.

Isaac lived a quiet, uneventful life, never did any acts of special heroism, never was a great forceful leader, indeed was rather subordinated and imposed upon all his life, by his mother, his wife and his son, as well as by the neighboring peoples, who fought with his herdmen, and stole the wells they dug (chap. 26:20-22).

But just so, he is the more comforting to the great mass of us common people now who have more or less the same experiences. He did not win any great fame, but he lived a quiet, clean, creditable life, and left a good example and a clean situation to his successors. And I think if we could get all the world up to that standard we might consider that we had achieved a very successful world. So we may claim that in the case of Isaac this "personally conducted" plan proved itself a success. We may quietly notice that it was rather a financial success, too, for the record emphasizes the fact that Isaac became a very wealthy man (chap. 26:13, 14).

V

Isaac followed in the footsteps of his noble father Abraham, and followed so closely as to imitate his scheme of calling his wife his sister, to avoid danger to himself from the Philistine king. However, Rebekah was resourceful enough to avoid being actually taken into his house, and Jehovah as a friend intervened again to set matters right.

26 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines, unto Gerar. 2 And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: 3 sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; 4 and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; 5 because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. 6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: 7 and the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, My wife; lest, *said he,* the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. 8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die because of her. 10 And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might easily have lain with thy wife, and thou wouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. 11 And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

Isaac spent most of his life in the south country, a close neighbor of the petty king of Gerar, in the country afterward occupied by the Philistines and called here by their name. He had various encounters with this people, some of which might have had serious consequences if Jehovah's providence had not always spread protection over him.

The first was this one just spoken of concerning his wife. Another was a more serious one concerning property rights. We have spoken of the jealousy and bad blood that always exists between the population that has settled down to steady farming and the wandering Bedouin hovering around them. As in the time of Abraham, the farmers kept destroying the wells to keep Isaac's people from pasturing their flocks too near them. Isaac patiently dug out the wells again, and as the farmers' anger and threatening increased he moved farther and farther away, till they finally let him alone and he could settle down in peace.

That is the kind of man he was—not very heroic perhaps, but the world would be a great deal more peaceful, happier and better if there were more like him. Jesus seemed to approve of that kind of men (Matt. 5:5 and 39-41).

In his quiet way he was quite as loyal to God as his illustrious father, and God several times appears to him and confirms and strengthens the promises and covenants he had made with Abraham. Abimelech also, the neighboring king, began to feel at last that it would be good policy to keep on terms of friendship and alliance with a sheik that was becoming so rich and powerful. So he goes to him and negotiates a treaty, much the same as he had made with the father Abraham. Again the time coincided with the finding of water in a well they were digging—an important event in the desert. And so they held a double celebration of the two events, and added another confirmation to the name "Beersheba," Well of the Oath.

12 And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and Jehovah blessed him. 13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great: 14 and he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him. 15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. 16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac,

Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. 17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20 And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek because they contended with him. 21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. 24 And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host. 27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore are ye come unto me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28 And they said, We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee: and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee, 29 that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of Jehovah. 30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. 31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. 32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him. We have found water. 33 And he called it Shibah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

34 And when Esau was forty years old he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35 and they were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

CHAPTER XIV

Jacob the Self-Willed

I

IN chapter 25:27-34, an incident is related that I presume we all tend to pass over as merely an interesting little episode of no special importance, just a little curious scrap that the author found somewhere and happened to put in. I am inclined to think it is more than that. We have found few if any such mere scraps thus far that did not have a real value for the purpose of the author.

> 27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. 28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint: 30 and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with [1]that same red *pottage;* for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 31 And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright. 32 And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me? 33 And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. 34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.

This incident is specially connected with the subject of the special relation to God, the special conducting of Jehovah which was so important in the life of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob highly valued that relation and took strong measures to get it, that is to say, to assure himself that he would get it. Now whether we approve or disapprove of the measures he took to get it, the fact remains that he valued it and wanted it. In the plan of the author's argument that fact is a matter of chief importance.

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[1] Heb. *the red* pottage, *this red* pottage.

The method he took is surely open to serious criticism. But we now often do good things in ways open to criticism. And different ages view things differently That kind of sharp practice would not seem as offensive to the people of that age as perhaps it may to us now. Rather, it was a kind of thing they cultivated as valuable.

And so we might excuse our author if he recorded this as something in Jacob's favor. He wanted the special relation to God and took eager measures to get it. Surely that might be considered as something to his credit.

But is that the attitude of our author and the way he intends this incident to be received? I rather think it is not. He does not declare his disapproval openly. There is the delicacy of touch of the artist. He leaves it for us to see and feel for ourselves.

Though he does not put them close together there can be no question that this narrative was to be taken in connection with the account of his deceiving his father and defrauding his brother, recorded in chapter twenty-seven. He does not say anything openly to disapprove of what Jacob did there. He takes it for granted that everyone will spontaneously condemn him for that act, (though strange to say I have seen persons even in this day that tried to justify it). If we would disapprove of that without being told to do so he relied on us to also disapprove of this as they are both of the same fundamental nature.

Why did he put it in? What is its place and use in the story? I think its place and use is just the same as that of the incident where Abraham takes the slave Hagar as a concubine in order to get an heir. In both cases it was trying to help out God by questionable means and being afraid that he would not fulfil his promise.

Jacob knew that he was under the covenant relation by virtue of his birth. More than that, the oracle given to his mother before his birth said he was to be chief, and doubtless he knew of that. It was to insure that the oracle would come true that he resorted to this questionable sharp practice, just as Abraham did, and both with very distressing results.

The author intends this and the cheating of Isaac to be seen as both in the same series. He intends us to consider this act as tending to lead on to that act. As we shall see, their result was to fill the whole of his after life with strife, trouble and suffering, and their cause was that he would not wait for the conducting of God.

God did fulfill his promise to hold him in a special relation and also to give him the leadership, but he did it in an entirely different way than by this selfish sharp practice. With Jacob as with Abraham, the plans that were dictated by their own wisdom without the guiding of God only got them into trouble and loss. This is intended to emphasize the success that God's guiding care brought to them both.

Jacob had evidently long been brooding over the desirableness of this birthright, and forming plans and projects to some day be able to acquire it. Doubtless the financial side, the headship of the tribe and the property inheritance, had some place in his mind, but they could not have had the sole place. He was not foolish enough to suppose that a few words between him and Esau would have any conclusive weight in settling such matters, in the face of the unquestioned right of his father to dispose of the property as he would, and the power of his much stronger warlike brother to take whatever he chose.

It might not have much effect on the material, physical side, but it might and should, he believed, be decisive in the matter of their comparative relations toward Jehovah and his consequent attitude toward them. That was a far more important matter with people then than we are apt to imagine. In our sceptical, materialistic age that matter is for practical life almost completely ignored, but with people then it was a very real and important thing that must always be taken into account.

One day a good opportunity appeared. Esau came in from a long hunting trip almost dead with hunger, and the smell of something that Jacob was cooking drove him almost frantic, as it naturally would.

"Give me something to eat and be quick about it—some of that red stuff you are cooking there" (cf. Bible margin).

Jacob knew that Esau cared nothing for the titular birthright, probably had often heard him speak slightingly of it and boast that he was quite able to provide for himself. So, at first probably more than half in jest, he says: "All right. I will if you will give me your birthright."

Very possibly they had discussed the subject often before, and Esau in his present state of mind explodes.

"Birthright! What do I care for that birthright! What I need is not to be born but to keep what life I have. Give me something to eat before I drop dead of hunger, and you can have the precious (?) birthright and welcome."

Now Jacob sees that there is a chance to make it really serious. He has Esau's word, but his crafty soul sees that it will be better to have it fully confirmed, so he goes at the matter seriously and proposes that Esau do what would be legally recognized there as fully confirming a bargain. Esau makes the bargain oath, eats his fill of the savory pottage and goes away wiping his mouth and muttering: "Fool Jacob! to make so much fuss over a little thing like that!"

We must not attach too much importance to Jacob's seeking for the birthright. It does not stand for conversion or piety. It does not mean that he is going to serve God, but merely that he wants God to serve him. Perhaps many modern Christians get not much farther, but it is yet a long way from the kingdom of heaven.

As we have said, he was right in valuing that for which the birthright stood, but wrong in the way he took to get it. He was seeking a good thing in a bad way. That habit grew on him. The next time he tried it he did a much worse thing that nearly landed him in disaster and wrecked his life.

II

With chapter twenty-seven the interest passes on definitely to the history of Jacob. He is the third of the trio that the author uses to illustrate the working of God's personally conducted experiment, all three completely different characters.

Before we go on with the story let us make sure of the kind of character the author intends to portray here. There is too much of a disposition to assume that because a man is given prominence in the Bible record his character must be specially good. This is quite wrong. There is almost no man there, even the best, but has some serious faults or sins recorded against him, and as for Jacob, at least in the early part of his life we must set him down as decidedly bad. Indeed it is definitely in that rôle that the author intends to use him in the narrative.

He intends to show three types of persons under the conducting influence of God. The first, Abraham, was the strong man of exceptional faith and righteousness. The second, Isaac, was the weak, sheltered, tradition-following man, good because he was surrounded by good influences—about on the level of a good many of us now. Jacob is intended as the bad man with crooked tendencies and evil inclinations. At least he was that to start with, and the plan of the author is to show what the personal conducting of God can do with that sort of man.

As in the case of Cain, the author starts out with a "close up," to let us see this character in Jacob. He does it by one or two vivid incidents, though it crops out more or less in other incidents. He has foreshadowed it in the incident concerning the birthright. Now he shows him in an act of deceit and fraud to both his father and brother, about as mean as could be imagined.

It is true that he also, like Adam (and like Abram, pp. 173f.), was tempted to it by a woman, by his own mother. At the same time it was he that did it, he wanted the stake it was done for, and he had the criminal dexterity and craft to put it through successfully.

It was against his own father, and it was against that father when he was old, blind and helpless, and ought to have received pity and assistance instead of deception. It was against his brother whom he had already deprived by craft of something he counted most valuable, and whom he would now deprive of receiving whatever remainder of blessing might be possibly left for him. And also it was sacrilege against God by trying to get favors from him by lying and fraud, favors which he should have trusted God's word that he would give him without that.

27 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Here am I. 2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. 3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison; 4 and make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. 6 And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7 Bring me venison, and make me savory food, that I may eat, and bless thee before Jehovah before my death. 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory food for thy father, such as he loveth: 10 and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless thee before his death. 11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. 12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13 And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. 14 And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 And Rebekah took the goodly garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son; 16 and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: 17 and she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? 19 And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because Jehovah thy God sent me good speed. 21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. 22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he

felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24 And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 25 And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. 27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said,

See, the smell of my son
Is as the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed:
28 And God give thee of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of grain and new wine:
29 Let peoples serve thee,
And nations bow down to thee:
Be lord over thy brethren,
And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:
Cursed be every one that curseth thee,
And blessed be every one that blesseth thee.

30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also made savory food, and brought it unto his father; and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. 32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau. 33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, *and* he shall be blessed. 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with grain and new wine have I sustained him: and what then shall I do for thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up

his voice, and wept. 39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him,

Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling,
And of the dew of heaven from above;
40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother;
And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt break loose,
That thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck.

The story is familiar. The poor old blind father, almost in his dotage, sends Esau out to the hunt to get something that he hoped might once more tickle his jaded appetite, and promises to give him a father's blessing in reward. Rebekah overhears, and, jealous for the advantage of Jacob she puts him up to a plan to deceive the father and get the blessing for himself.

Usually it is the strong, athletic son that is the mother's hero. But Rebekah was too fond of dominating to get along well with Esau, and fitted in much better with the more suggestible and more crafty Jacob, while the weak, old father idolized his brave hunter son Esau, as well as loved the tasty venison which he brought him.

The scheme the mother proposed had some difficulties which she engaged to overcome, and some dangers which she believed Jacob was crafty and expert enough to safely dare. He brought some kids from the flock. She cooked them to taste like venison, put the skins on his neck and hands to make them feel like Esau's, and treacherously got some of Esau's own clothes which he had left with her, to complete the deception.

Jacob took the food to his father, lied boldly and brazenly in answer to his inquiries, sacrilegiously drags in the name of Jehovah to account for his bringing it so quickly, and so manipulates the skins on his hands and neck and the smell of his brother Esau's clothes, that the old father is finally convinced.

The father was first surprised that he had been able to find game and get back so quickly. Next his suspicions were aroused when he felt sure that the voice sounded like Jacob and not like Esau. But Jacob was a master at crafty deception, and Isaac had been so accustomed all his life to having his own opinions overridden, first by his mother and later by his wife, that he had got used to believing that he must be wrong, and had lost the power to stand out for what he himself thought. So he accepted the deception and gave Jacob the blessing, making him the head and lord of everything, and all his brothers and kinsman subject to him.

We can be sure that Jacob lost no time getting out and away as soon as his father's blessing was finished. But even so he narrowly escaped Esau coming in with the real venison he had prepared. Of course the father was stunned to find that he had been deceived and had given the blessing where he had not intended. But he considered the blessing to be from God, only coming through him as an instrument. It had been given to Jacob and he had no power to change it or take it away.

Esau was heartbroken, and broke out in "an exceedingly great and bitter cry." He was chagrined to have been outwitted and defrauded. He believed the blessing his father promised was in some way a thing of great value. In addition we may believe he loved his father as his father loved him, and he was angry that the love and favor of his father should have gone to someone else, especially have gone to his slow, weak brother, whom he was inclined to despise if he did not yet hate.

> "Hast thou but one blessing my father?
> Bless me even me also O my father."

The father had assigned supremacy to Jacob and lordship over all, and could not go back on that. But he managed to shape up a future of some attractiveness which he predicted for Esau, and he had to be satisfied with that. But in his heart was roused an intense hatred for his supplanting brother which was to forever break up the peace and fellowship of the home.

III

Did God allow this crime to go unpunished? To many people it seems so. It seems as if God not only gave no punishment for this most disgraceful deed but rather even rewarded it. For right after it he gave to Jacob that vision of the Ladder up to Heaven, one of the most famous and beautiful visions on record, and followed it up with splendid promises of protection, help and future greatness.

If it is asked did God punish Jacob by some supernatural judgment, we say at once that he did not. That is not the way God carries on his moral government. But Jacob did get punishment in plenty. God's providence is resourceful enough to always insure that. It came by natural means, but it came sure and swift and long drawn out through almost all the remainder of his life.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. 42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; 44 and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 45 until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I

will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

28 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. 3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a company of peoples; 4 and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham. 5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Paddan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; 7 and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan-aram: 8 and Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; 9 and Esau went unto Ishmael, and took, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife.

His sin brought its own punishment. It brought banishment from home. It brought long years of bitter servitude, deceived and mocked by the man he served, and later when old age was laying its heavy hand upon him, as it had upon his father, he was to experience from his own sons a deception as shameful and even more cruel than he had given his father, a deception that for twenty long years caused him to bow under a grief that was "bringing down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Punishment was not lacking also to the mother who had tempted and assisted him in his sin. People who commit crimes seldom realize till too late what are going to be the consequences. Rebekah seemed to have overlooked what her other husky son Esau might do. Only after it was all over and she was congratulating herself on her complete success, she heard rumor going around that Esau was boasting that as soon as he could do it without pain to his old father he was going to kill Jacob.

She knew Esau. She well knew that he could do it and that he would do it. Something must be done. There was no other safety but to get Jacob entirely out of the way. Where? She could think of no refuge nearer than her own family away off in far Padan-aram. And so Jacob had to flee for his life away off to that distant land and she lost him entirely.

She lost the son that was her favorite, and it is not likely, after what she had done, that her other son Esau would be much comfort to her. As far as the narrative shows she never saw Jacob again, and possibly never heard from him again, as they did not have mail and telegraph in those days. The probability is that Rebekah not only lost him but was left all her life with the terror on her heart that he may have been killed by beasts or enemies, enslaved or met with some other of the disasters so likely to happen in those days on such a long and unprotected journey.

And here she is entirely dropped from the story, and we do not meet her again except in the statement (chap. 49:31) that she was buried in the cave of Machpelah. Isaac had loved her dearly when she came to him from the far country. Probably in spite of her great fault, all in all she had been a good and loving wife and such a helper as a man of his type really needed. And at the end they were permitted to lie down together peacefully side by side for the long last sleep.

In connection with this departure of Jacob we have another of those cases where critics feel sure that we have two contradictory accounts taken from separate sources. Possibly they may have been from separate sources, but even a little appreciation of human nature would seem to leave no doubt that they must be both true, or at least not at all contradictory.

One account says that Rebekah told Jacob that he must flee to Padan-aram for safety, and the other says that his father sent him there to get a wife. But can anyone conceive that a woman of Rebekah's resource and wit would let her favorite son slink off mysteriously at night, with the whole camp wondering what had happened to him and perhaps sending out expeditions to find and rescue him? Is it not the most probable thing in the world that the wit which could plan so well to dupe the old husband before would be equally able, and quite ready, to dupe and use him now, and so be able to send her son away openly without any mystery or any questions asked. What more plausible plea could she devise than just this plan to have him go to far Padan-aram to get a wife.

On the other hand, it was hardly customary for rich princes to send their sons and heirs off in that way to get their own wives. But if all this story is taken together, and Jacob had deceived his father as related, we could readily conceive that, though great and rich, that father might thus leave his son to his own resources. Isaac might take just this plan to discipline the young man and make him have a little suffering for his crime. It is just what we would expect of a weak, petulant man of Isaac's calibre. He would send him to Padan-aram and let him have some hardship, go on foot and alone. He would give him a father's blessing to take with him, but nothing more.

Go he must, and as the angry Esau would not be too much pleased with his escaping at all it might be necessary, even with his father's approval and blessing to get away more or less secretly and alone.

CHAPTER XV

Jacob's Conversion

I

SO Jacob starts out on the long journey to Haran, and on the way he has the wonderful vision. It is usually called the Ladder up to Heaven—more correctly perhaps, a stairway. It was an easy passage right from him up to heaven. It meant that heaven was accessible to him. Angel messengers were continually passing up and down that stairway from heaven to him, as though he was a special object of heaven's care. Jehovah himself was there and spoke to him words of comfort and promises of rich favors to be bestowed on him in the future.

10 And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13 And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. 16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. 17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that

he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place [1]Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. 20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, 22 then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Now how can we account for or justify such a splendid favor being shown to him just at that time? It has been criticized on moral grounds. What kind of a moral lesson does it teach? What kind of incentive does it put before men? Here Jacob has been guilty of about the meanest and most criminal kind of conduct, and the first thing God does to him after it is to give him one of the most beautiful and assuring visions, with promise of protection and prosperity. Will not this lead men to think that wrongdoing is a trivial thing, and no bar to God's favor? And how can we justify a God of any moral equity at all doing a thing like that?

If this one incident stood alone perhaps we might have some excuse for making such a charge. But we must take this incident in its setting in the whole movement of which it forms a part. No one can read this story from the time Abraham comes into it without seeing that, as the author has written it, the idea of a covenant or promise on the part of God is made fundamental. It is repeated over and over with increasing emphasis. It will not do, in interpreting an author, to ignore that which he makes the main governing condition of all his story. The whole movement is made to revolve around the idea of a bargain or agreement between God and these people, a definite and real obligation that God puts himself under with regard to them.

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[1] That is, *The house of God.*

Whether there ever really were such promises made or not does not matter in our study now. We are only interested in finding what the author meant to say. The author represents that there were such promises, and bases his whole story on the idea that there were, and so that is the way the story must be interpreted to get the message the author intended. God had made definite promises to Abraham and to Isaac to protect and care for their children. God had put himself under obligation to do all that a friend or father could do, and be all that a friend or father could be, to those children. Jacob was one of those children.

And if ever a man needed a friend Jacob needed one now. Not because he was so good he deserved it but because he was so bad and had got himself right on the brink of both moral and physical disaster. Does a father forsake his son because he is heading for ruin—or does a true friend? That is the situation the author paints. The question is, what will God do in such a situation?

A very few days of travel would make Jacob feel in what desperate straits he was. His muscles were not hardened by long tramps in the chase, like his hunter brother Esau's, so he was doubtless desperately tired. That he was in constant danger we can see from the story of the two strangers in Sodom (chap. 19:4-10). A stranger in a strange city, perhaps he would be kidnaped and sold as a slave or worse. If he stayed outside in the mountains there were wild beasts around.

As the darkness fell homesickness and loneliness would settle down upon him. Would he ever see his home again? Not much chance. And such a good home as he had had.

What a fool he had been to do the act that he could now see was sure to make him lose it all. And then the feeling of the wickedness and meanness of all he had done would come crushing down upon him. It is in such circumstances as that that conscience gets in its most effective work.

Night finds him on a lonely mountainside. He could not go back and he had not strength to go on farther. So he just got a stone to rest his head on, lay down and fell into the dead sleep of complete exhaustion. Was that pillow of stone meant to have the same symbolic meaning as the feeding on husks in the story of another erring boy?

II

Now what will a father, or even a friend, do when he sees that a wayward boy is going astray and ruining himself? Is not that just the time when he will want to make some special effort of love and help to try to win his love and loyalty and win him back again into right ways? And was not this—if we may use the term—just the psychological moment for such a move to be most effective?

Jacob was undoubtedly down in the lowest depths of despair and repentance. He was alone, disappointed, homesick, miserable. As far as he could see, he had not a friend in the world.

That is just the moment that God takes to come and put his hand on him and say, "Jacob, I am your friend."

No word of reproach for the past. Love does not reproach. No demand for better obedience for the future. He could leave that to Jacob himself to volunteer, as we see he quickly did. He just says to him, "I am here. You can trust in me and I will see you through. You are the son of Abraham and Isaac, and I will be just as good a friend to you as I was to them" (vss. 13-15).

That is the kind of God our author wanted us to think God is. Jesus told the same story in a little different words in the fifteenth of Luke, but it is only the same story. Indeed our author goes even farther. In the story in Luke the father receives the boy when he has turned and come back home again, but this story has the father go out to seek and find him and bring him back. And we have a little more here than we have in the story in Luke, for we have in the future chapters the information that the father love of God was successful, the boy was won. This was the turning point in the life of Jacob. The future of his path was upward toward the light.

Jacob had the nemesis of his crime full measure, for God has arranged nature so that it must always assure that. And Jacob was not changed over into a perfect saint at a single stroke. God seldom does his work that way—though we are always eager to see it done so. Jacob had still the same scheming, crafty natural disposition, and it still led him through a more or less crooked and checkered career, but he was always getting better and more loyal to God. And in the end he became the grand old patriarch Israel—Man of God—which all his race were quite justified in looking back to with honor. This was the time of Jacob's conversion.

We may notice that he proposed to show his new life in a characteristic Hebrew way, by a money bargain—to give one tenth of all his profits to Jehovah. That was a good sign. We can be more sure of the genuineness of any man's conversion if it converts him in that which is most precious to him, and that, in a great many others besides Jacob, is the pocketbook. With very many, unfortunately, it does not reach that far.

III

Jacob now felt he had a friend and the protection of Jehovah, so he could go on his way in peace. After very many weary days, at last he came, as he judged, near the end of his journey. He came to a well out on the plain. A well in that country is a place where a traveler is pretty sure to find someone. There were several flocks of sheep with their shepherds there. Wells are scarce, and this one was so valuable that it was protected by a large stone not easily moved, and they waited to water all with one moving of the stone.

Jacob begins to make inquiries. He finds they are from Haran, so that must be the name of the city just ahead, the very city for which he is aiming.

Possibly they may know his relatives there?

Yes, sure they know them, and here comes the daughter of Laban now with his sheep.

The end of his journey at last. He hears the news with great joy, and not the less because Rachel herself was pretty good to look at. He runs to meet her, tells her that he is her cousin from far away, and there ensues a very warm and affectionate—cousinly—salutation. It is a little hard to understand why he

"lifted up his voice and wept,"

unless perhaps it was thinking what he had missed for so long. Of course he had to show off a little before his pretty cousin by rolling off the big stone himself and watering her flock.

Rachel ran away home to her father Laban to tell him the news—the same Laban that once before we have seen welcoming one come on a marriage mission. He received Jacob hospitably and welcomed him to his home, though as there were no gold bracelets and rings in sight we have no record of his saying:

> "Come in thou blessed of Jehovah
> Why standest thou without?"

29 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the children of the east. 2 And he looked, and, behold, a well in the field, and, lo, three flocks of sheep lying there by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and the stone upon the well's mouth was great. 3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in its place. 4 And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence are ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. 5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. 6 And he said unto them, Is it well with him? And they said, It is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. 7 And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. 8 And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep. 9 While he was yet speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. 10 And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. 12 And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

13 And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. 14 And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month. 15 And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? 16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 And Leah's eyes were tender; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored. 18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. 19 And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should

give her to another man: abide with me. 20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. 23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. 24 And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid unto his daughter Leah for a handmaid. 25 And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? 26 And Laban said, It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the first-born. 27 Fulfil the week of this one, and we will give thee the other also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. 28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife. 29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her handmaid. 30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Hospitality in the Orient is pretty generous, and for a whole month Jacob remained with Laban—probably not entirely inactive. Rachel was out in the fields with the flocks, and there was likely some work there that he could do too. At any rate Laban meantime some way had sized him up and decided that he was an able and efficient man that it would be well to keep. He also saw that though Jacob was the son of his very rich brother-in-law sheik Isaac, yet he was here without any money and without any sign of authority or direction from his father. Why? He may or may not have known. Apparently he had his own way to make. Better have a definite understanding and make some kind of a permanent bargain with him.

Jacob had his answer all ready. "I don't want any money, I will work for you seven years for Rachel." This would be a fine plan, thought Jacob. He would stay there the seven years, they would be married, and by that time

Esau would have gotten over his anger and he would go back to his father again, be the heir of the great, rich sheik Isaac, and they would live happily ever afterward.

But plans sometimes miscarry. His mother had promised to send and bring him back (chap. 27:45), but had failed to do so. Why? Possibly she had meantime died. That part had failed. And he had overlooked the character of the keen, selfish, crafty man with whom he was dealing. He quite miscalculated if he supposed that Laban would have let him go safely and peacefully back home in any case. And besides that Laban had a keen scheme to get seven more years of labor out of him—and into the bargain dispose of his weak-eyed, homely other daughter that seems to have become somewhat of a drug on the market.

When the wedding night came it was Leah that came to him as his wife. After the feasting Jacob was of course too drunk to know the difference till morning, and then it was too late to right himself. All he could do was to promise to work another seven years to get the Rachel who was the one he wanted.

Poor homely Leah! We feel sorry for her, as she had feelings the same as anyone else. She could not help being homely, and had doubtless suffered enough over it already. We will not, however, be so ungallant as to even suggest that she might be glad to be able to get married even in this unwanted way. We can say, however, that God sympathized with her enough to give her what was the supreme desire of every oriental woman, a large family of sons—with the added satisfaction that her beautiful rival Rachel did not have any.

CHAPTER XVI

Jacob the Patriarch

I

THE years rolled by, during which Jacob became the father of a large family of eleven sons, one of whom at last was the son of the beloved Rachel. Laban made clear that he considered Jacob too valuable a man to let him go away, and the two crafty Hebrews matched their wits in devising terms under which Jacob should stay and work. Laban seemed to have the upper hand, and again and again changed the terms of the contract. But Jacob was just a little more crafty still, and managed every time to come out ahead in the end.

25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service wherewith I have served thee. 27 And Laban said unto him, If now I have found favor in thine eyes, *tarry: for* I have divined that Jehovah hath blessed me for thy sake. 28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. 29 And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle have fared with me. 30 For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it hath increased unto a multitude; and Jehovah hath blessed thee whithersoever I turned: and now when shall I provide for my own house also? 31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me aught: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed thy flock and keep it. 32 I will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence every speckled and spotted one, and every black one among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and *of such* shall be my hire. 33 So shall my righteousness answer for me hereafter, when thou shalt come concerning my hire that is before thee: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and

black among the sheep, that, *if found* with me, shall be counted stolen. 34 And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word. 35 And he removed that day the he-goats that were ringstreaked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons; 36 and he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

37 And Jacob took him rods of fresh poplar, and of the almond and of the plane-tree; and peeled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. 38 And he set the rods which he had peeled over against the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs where the flocks came to drink; and they conceived when they came to drink. 39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted. 40 And Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstreaked and all the black in the flock of Laban: and he put his own droves apart, and put them not unto Laban's flock. 41 And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger of the flock did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the flock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods; 42 but when the flock were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. 43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, and maid-servants and men-servants, and camels and asses.

So the years passed, and in spite of his father-in-law's jealousy Jacob was getting very rich. There came rumors to him that the sons of Laban were getting hostile, and perhaps hatching up some scheme to get his possessions away from him. Some means must be devised to get permanently away and independent of the establishment of his father-in-law.

The most feasible pretext would be to say that he was going back to his own father and his own tribe. Even so he knew that Laban would never permit it, so the only way was to find a chance to slip off secretly. He waited till a time when Laban would be away on a sheep-shearing expedition for a number of days. He got all ready, got his wives and all his family away out to the distant encampment where his own flocks and herds were feeding. Then, as soon as he saw Laban safely out of the way they all started off as fast as they could go on the way back toward the land of Canaan.

31 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. 2 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as beforetime. 3 And Jehovah said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. 4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, 5 and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as beforetime; but the God of my father hath been with me. 6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. 7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; and God suffered him not to hurt me. 8 If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the flock bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstreaked shall be thy wages; then bare all the flock ringstreaked. 9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. 10 And it came to pass at the time that the flock conceive, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the he-goats which leaped upon the flock were ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled. 11 And the angel of God said unto me in the dream, Jacob: and I said, Here am I. 12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see: all the he-goats which leaped upon the flock are ringstreaked, speckled and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. 13 I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst a pillar, where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy nativity. 14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15 Are we not accounted by him as foreigners? for he hath sold us, and hath also quite devoured our money. 16 For all the riches which God hath taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon the camels; 18 and he carried away all his cattle, and all his substance which he had gathered, the cattle of his getting, which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to Isaac his father unto the land of Canaan. 19 Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's. 20 And Jacob stole away unawares

to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. 21 So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.

22 And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. 23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the mountain of Gilead. 24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said unto him, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 25 And Laban came up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain: and Laban with his brethren encamped in the mountain of Gilead. 26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword? 27 Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp; 28 and didst not suffer me to kiss my sons and my daughters? now hast thou done foolishly. 29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 30 And now, *though* thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, *yet* wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? 31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Lest thou shouldest take thy daughters from me by force. 32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, he shall not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maid-servants; but he found them not. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. 34 Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat upon them. And Laban felt about all the tent, but found them not. 35 And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise up before thee; for the manner of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the teraphim.

36 And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast hotly pursued after me? 37 Whereas thou hast felt about all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us two. 38 These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flocks have I not eaten. 39 That which was torn of beasts I brought

not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. 40 Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes. 41 These twenty years have I been in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. 42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

43 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children whom they have borne? 44 And now come, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. 45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. 46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made a heap: and they did eat there by the heap. 47 And Laban called it [1]Jegar-saha-dutha: but Jacob called it [2]Galeed. 48 And Laban said, This heap is witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed: 49 and [3]Mizpah, for he said, Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. 50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, and if thou shalt take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; see, God it witness betwixt me and thee. 51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold the pillar, which I have set betwixt me and thee. 52 This heap be witness, and the pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. 53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the Fear of his father Isaac. 54 And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mountain. 55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

Jacob got away safely on his trek toward his old home. He thought he had to romance a little to his wives about the way God had helped him to acquire his possessions.

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[1] That is, *The heap of witness*, in Aramaic.
[2] That is, *The heap of witness*, in Hebrew.
[3] That is, *The watch tower*.

But his wives were loyal to him, and by a little strategy he got his party together away off from the home center and all prepared for a quick start whenever the propitious moment should arrive.

Sheep-shearing is a great event with the keeper of large flocks. Since their bargain had been made Laban's flocks were kept at a great distance from those belonging to Jacob, and Jacob chose for his flight a time when Laban had gone to some of the more distant flocks for the great annual sheep-shearing festival.

It was three days before Laban heard of it, so Jacob could get a pretty good start. But vast herds and flocks could not be driven very rapidly, and in a few days Laban, who had started out in pursuit, easily overtook him.

Now the friendly care of Jehovah comes into the story again. It was represented as by the direction of Jehovah that Jacob began this journey back to Canaan, and now, when danger threatens him because of it Jehovah intervenes again to protect him.

Here was just the pretext Laban wanted. Jacob was a runaway vassal. It was rebellion, treason. He would be quite justified in public esteem if he punished him with death and confiscated all his goods. But Jehovah came to Laban in a dream the night before he reached Jacob, and so admonished him that he did not dare to do him any injury.

Next day he catches up with Jacob and makes a great bluff of anger at his treachery, and Jacob makes an equally great bluff of injured innocence. Laban claims that he is angry because Jacob did not let him have a chance to give his daughters a brilliant send-off when they went away. Jacob comes right out plain and says he was convinced that he would have never let his daughters go away at all.

With good dramatic tact the author throws in here a little side incident to temper the tragic moment. Rachel the petted beauty, had had the presumption when she left to take along some little sacred trinkets that were very precious in the family. Laban accuses them of taking these, and Jacob in his ignorance, gets very indignant at him for hinting such a thing, challenges him to hunt and if he finds them anyone that has them will be put to death.

Laban makes a thorough search, but Rachel is a little too cunning for him and manages to keep them where he does not find them. So now it is Jacob's turn to get up on his dignity. Laban is a little abashed and the story can go on now more calmly telling how they thrashed matters out between them. Jacob appeals to the long, hard service he had rendered, and only by the special grace of God had anything to show for it. Laban counters that by the laws of Bedouin possession it was all within his tribe and so all lawfully his possession. However, he will let him depart and set up an independent establishment.

So they proceed to make a covenant or treaty with each other. In oriental style Jacob sets up a pillar and Laban's sons pile up a great heap of stones. These were to stand as witness to the treaty they had made, and they called Jehovah also to witness and see that these promises were not broken in future.

> "The Lord watch between me and thee
> When we are absent one from another."

They both look back to the same ancestor Terah, and worshiped the same Jehovah. So Jacob made a great sacrifice to Jehovah and a great feast for all to celebrate the conclusion of this most important business. All were put into friendly relations again. Laban and his party said good-bye and went back home, and Jacob went on again, now safely and peacefully to continue his journey.

32 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2 And Jacob said when he saw them, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place [4]Mahanaim.

Just what meaning precisely this is meant to convey it may not be easy exactly to define. Certainly it appears in some way intended to indicate a friendly act on the part of God.

A great crisis is past. A great era of Jacob's life has closed, and he is just entering on another, new era, with different tasks and different problems. If God is personally conducting his life it is appropriate that at such an important juncture he should give some formal indication of his guiding nearness, some congratulation, some Godspeed for the new expedition on which he is embarking. It would seem to be some such idea as this that is intended to be conveyed by this statement that the angels of God came out to meet him here when he was just saying good-bye to the old life and starting out on the new.

II

3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the field of Edom. 4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau: Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now: 5 and I have oxen, and asses, *and* flocks, and men-servants, and maid-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in thy sight. 6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. 7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and was distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds,

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[4] That is, *Two hosts*, or, *Companies.*

and the camels, into two companies; 8 and he said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the company which is left shall escape. 9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, O Jehovah, who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will do thee good: 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. 11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children. 12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

13 And he lodged there that night, and took of that which he had with him a present for Esau his brother: 14 two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals. 16 And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. 17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? 18 then thou shalt say, *They are* thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, he also is behind us. 19 And he commanded also the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him; 20 and ye shall say, Moreover, behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept me. 21 So the present passed over before him: and he himself lodged that night in the company.

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok. 23 And he took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had. 24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it

that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, *said he,* I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31 And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel, and he limped upon his thigh. 32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

33 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. 2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. 3 And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. 5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant. 6 Then the handmaids came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. 7 And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. 8 And he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, to find favor in the sight of my lord. 9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which thou hast be thine. 10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. 11 Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. 12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. 13 And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and that the flocks and herds with me have their young: and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on gently, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come unto my lord unto Seir. 15 And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find favor in the sight of my lord. 16 So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

18 And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the

land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram; and encamped before the city. 19 And he bought the parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money. 20 And he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

One more incident has to be introduced, one more trouble rooted out of the way before the stage is cleared and Jacob may go on with his new life. The old trouble with his injured brother Esau still remained. Was it on his conscience, and the nearer his life got right the heavier the memory rested? Also he still felt himself under the shadow of danger. Had Esau ever forgotten or forgiven? It was a good many years now, but some men can hold an enmity a long while. He knew the quick, impulsive nature of his brother, and even if he had long forgotten, a sight of the one who had supplanted him might make his anger flare up again hotter than ever. Esau was a warrior and could strike hard if he chose.

Jacob was no coward, and he faced the danger like a man. He was not willing to have it hanging over him indefinitely. He wanted the matter settled now, so that he might begin his new life clear and free. So he sent messengers to his brother in Mt. Seir. They were to tell him how he had been all this time with his uncle Laban in Haran, that he had become very rich and was now coming back home again. The messengers went and came back saying that when Esau heard it he immediately started out to meet Jacob with four hundred soldiers.

Now what did that mean? It seems somewhat like the famous puzzle of "The Lady or the Tiger." Was he coming to take vengeance, or was he coming with a great retinue just to give his brother a royal welcome home? Possibly Esau himself did not know. He was very impulsive, and if he did anything he must do something big, so he takes a huge company of his tribesmen with him.

Perhaps his first reaction was for vengeance and settling the painful old score with blood. But as he traveled along his anger would cool. The memory would come up of the long years they had played together as happy boys. What was the little episode of the blessing anyway! It had not hurt him any, and it certainly did not do Jacob any good. Quite possibly by the time he got to Jacob's camp he had no other thought but that he was going to have a grand and glorious reunion with his long-lost brother.

But Jacob had no other idea but that he was coming for vengeance. Doubtless his conscience helped him to that conclusion. So he was going to be fully prepared. It is quite possible that a man of his wealth could have mustered more than four hundred retainers to meet his brother and give him battle. But he had had enough of strife and chose to meet the situation another way.

He first divided all his tribe and his possessions into two separate parts, so that if Esau did come and capture one that other one could run away and escape and he would have something left to begin with again.

Then he did the thing which the author intended should be considered the most important thing, and specifically characteristic of this régime which he is portraying. He committed his whole cause definitely to the Jehovah who was pledged to guide and protect him. He pleaded the promises made to his fathers and to himself, described his great need, and virtually implied that he had a right to expect that Jehovah would fully take care of him.

But that was not all that he did. He was not one of those modern deluded persons that think God's promise to cure or help us releases us from all necessity to do what we can to help ourselves. Jacob was an exceedingly keen schemer, and he took the very best means possible to allay the anger he believed his brother to have, and to gain his good-will.

He sent him a present—a magnificent present. It was really a small fortune, and to his roving brother in his bleak mountain home it might be especially welcome. We wonder if he could have been rich enough to spare all that without crippling himself.

But that was not all. He was a shrewd psychologist, and he arranged a scheme to have the present produce the greatest possible effect. He divided it up into half a dozen different bands that would come to Esau at intervals, one after another.

When the first one reached him he would be pleased—probably nearly as much pleased as if the whole present had come at once. This would put him into a good humor. Then a little later another band would come.

"What is this?"

"Oh, it is just a little present your brother Jacob has sent over to you."

He was already in a good humor. Now he begins to say:

"Well, he is a pretty good sort of a brother after all, and he wants to be friends."

Soon another band, more valuable than the others, appears, and he begins to laugh.

"I did not know that I was coming to a great gold mine like this."

And then another comes. Now he begins to feel embarrassed. But another appears, and still another. Even if he had come with the deadliest of hatred in his heart, who could withstand a bombardment of kindness like that? Not the big-hearted, emotional brother Esau.

Jacob hoped that these presents might be effective when they were received, but he was still somewhat uneasy. He sent his wives and children and all the personal belongings across the ford and away somewhere to a place of safety, while he stayed behind far into the night to think and plan alone. Suddenly in the darkness a man appeared. Friend or foe he knew not, but he sprang to meet him. They grappled and a great struggle began.

We may be sure Jacob put up a strong fight, but he could not succeed in overcoming. At length he began to suspect that his adversary was more than man. And when by a little mysterious touch the other entirely disabled him for fighting, he began to be certain. So he changed his tactics, and with now no power to fight he simply clung to him and demanded that he should give him a blessing. The divine antagonist expressed admiration for his determined persistence, both in fighting and in clinging for the blessing. He gave him the name Israel—man of God—because he had not given up his encounter with God till he had succeeded.

How? Not by force and contest, but by the stronger influence of sheer trusting appeal. Is not that the tone of the New Testament gospel (Luke 18:1-8), as well as of the message which the author is trying to impress by all his stories here?

The day dawned, and before long over there he sees Esau and his four hundred men approaching. He had done all he could. If the presents could do any good Esau had already received them. He takes his whole family with him and goes forward to meet him. It is noticeable that he puts his favorite Rachel and her son last in the safest place. They will not show fear, but with the dignity of hospitality they all went forward and bowed down in honor to their guest.

Esau could not stand any more of that. He sprang out from his company, ran to his brother, threw his arms around him and kissed him. All the ugly past was blotted completely out and they had a full reconciliation and a cordial, happy reunion.

"But what did you mean by all those flocks and herds that I met, and all the foolishness that the drovers said to me?"

"Oh, that is just a little present I sent because I was so glad to see you again."

"No! No! I could not think of such a thing! I am exceedingly well off in my own country and don't need anything more."

"But please take it just as a little pledge that all the bitterness and strife that has been between us is entirely gone."

Again Esau refused, but Jacob insisted so strongly that he finally accepted it, and thus incidentally shut out all possibility of any future revenge.

The old brotherly bond is now happily united again, so Esau proposes that they unite their bands, he going before to protect, go on to his country and have a grand reunion there. But Jacob knows better than to risk too much on the temper of his reconciled but impulsive brother. He makes a good excuse that his great company of flocks and herds could not keep pace with Esau's warrior band, and they would but embarrass each other, so he asks him to go on ahead and he would follow on slowly as the pace of the flocks permitted.

Anyway, Esau would leave some of his warriors to come with him as a guard. But no, Jacob insists that it is not necessary. So Esau went back to his mountain home, and Jacob went slowly on with his journey. He doubtless thought to let well enough alone, and just as well not to have to go over to Esau's country at all.

He made one long stop at a place, possibly over winter, to rest and build up his flocks, and the place afterward became a city and kept the name of Succoth—Booths. But he went on again, and finally came to the old camping ground of his ancestors near the town of Shechem. There he built an altar, established formal worship and settled down for a protracted stay.

He bought a piece of land that he might own the place where he pitched his tents, and also have, like Abraham, a place for family burials. There his son Joseph long afterward was buried (Josh. 24:32).The figures given for the purchase price make us suspect that he was a little more successful in his bargaining than his grandfather Abraham had been (chap. 23:16. See p. 225).

III

He probably stayed here some years, for his daughter Dinah, one of his later born children, had grown up to marriageable age. Here occurred one of those distressing incidents which illustrate the lawlessness of the times. It also throws such a light on the character of the sons that we may feel sure that if anything good finally came out of them it was not from their superior virtue but entirely to be credited to the God who was personally conducting them. That such men did become noble patriarchs and the founders of such a highly moral and superior race as the Hebrews came to be, is the author's proof that this last régime or plan was the successful one.

34 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her; and he took her, and lay with her, and humbled her. 3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. 4 And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. 5 Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; and his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they came. 6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. 7 And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done. 8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you, give her unto him to wife. 9 And make ye marriages with us; give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. 10 And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. 11 And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. 12 Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife. 13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with guile, and spake, because he had defiled Dinah their sister, 14 and said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. 15 Only on this condition will we consent unto you: if ye will be as we are, that every male of you be circumcised; 16 then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17 But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

18 And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. 19 And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was honored above all the house of his father. 20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21 These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for, behold, the land is large enough for them: let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only on this condition will the men consent unto us to dwell with us, to become one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. 23 Shall not their cattle and

their substance and all their beasts be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city. 25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city unawares, and slew all the males. 26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went forth. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28 They took their flocks and their herds and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field; 29 and all their wealth, and all their little ones and their wives, took they captive and made a prey, even all that was in the house. 30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and, I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. 31 And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?

The story is that while they were encamped there in rather free social contact with the people of the place, Shechem the son of the petty city king became enamored with Dinah, Jacob's daughter, humbled her and took her into his house. He grew so much in love with her that he asked his father, as the custom of the time was, to get him permission to marry her.

Jacob heard of the shame they had done his daughter, but as his sons and presumably the bulk of the tribe, were just then at a distance with the herds, he thought best to make no move till they were near to back him. When they came and heard of it they were all intensely angry, but they decided that they must work craftily. So when Shechem and his father came out to the encampment to ask for her in marriage they pretended to consent, but said there was one condition without which it would be impossible. The religious rite of circumcision was an absolute essential in their tribe. It would be impossible for such a close marriage relation to be permitted unless they all were circumcised.

Shechem and his father talked it over with the city leaders. The young man was very popular with the people, and they saw he was very eager for the match. Besides they slyly said among themselves, "It will eventually mean our absorbing into ourselves all this very wealthy tribe, and be an immensely good thing for the city." So as circumcision was a well-known and honored religious rite practiced by a good many peoples here and there, they consented.

But the rite, by cutting the flesh would develop a very painful wound about the third day that would make them almost incapable of any very active exercise. So two of the full brothers of Dinah, doubtless with a strong band of tribesmen, made a sudden assault upon the city, entirely overcame it and slew all the defenders. They looted the city, took their women and children for slaves and rescued their sister Dinah from the house of Shechem.

This was not by any means the first time—or the last—that a powerful band of Bedouins swooped down on a community of peaceful agriculturists, massacring and plundering them. That has always been quite a characteristic feature of border life. But this part of the country was too well settled for such things to be done with impunity. Some of the neighboring cities would be pretty sure to think such a dangerous neighbor would be better out of the way and would combine together to get rid of him. Jacob well understood his danger, and that it would be the best thing for him to get away from there. So the story says that, with God's direction he went back up to Bethel, which had many sacred associations, and held services to renew his allegiance to Jehovah there. He could thus leave the neighborhood of Shechem without the appearance of running away in fear.

IV

35 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. 2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments: 3 and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. 4 And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. 5 And they journeyed: and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. 6 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan (the same is Beth-el), he and all the people that were with him. 7 And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God was revealed unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. 8 And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried below Beth-el under the oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bacuth.

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. 11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12 and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. 13 And God went up from him in the place where he spake with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him, a pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink-offering there on, and poured oil thereon. 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

16 And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was still some distance to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. 17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; for now thou shalt have another

son. 18 And it came to pass, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. 19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem). 20 And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave: the same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. 21 And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard of it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: 23 the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun; 24 the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; 25 and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan and Naphtali; 26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid: Gad and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, that were born to him in Paddan-aram. 27 And Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre, to Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

28 And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years. 29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.

Jacob had not approved of the violent deed of his sons, and felt that his family were rather getting out of hand morally and religiously. So he planned to make it a great revival and consecration service. He made a search to take away all the idols and implements of false worship that they were secretly harboring. They started on the journey, and by the good favor of God journeyed safely, for all the petty princes around had developed such a wholesome fear of this fierce band of warriors that no attempt was made to organize any expedition of revenge. They were all probably well satisfied that they were getting safely rid of them.

At Bethel he built an altar commemorating the wonderful vision God had given him there long ago when he first fled from home. He held a great religious service, and God specially appeared to him and renewed all the covenants and promises that had been made to his house.

Bethel was still too near the scene of their violent raid to be safe, so he had no intention of staying there longer than for the religious service. He was going away south to the region of Hebron to rejoin his father's tribe once more.

On the way a great sorrow overtook him. His beloved wife Rachel died in child-birth. This was the little Benjamin that was to have such an important place in the after story.

The parcel of ground that Jacob had bought at Shechem was apparently intended to furnish a place for family burials, as Joseph's body long years afterward was buried there. But the danger of vengeance was too great to allow him to take the body there for burial, and it was too far and would take too long to take it away down where he was going, to Hebron and bury in Abraham's burial place there—where he did later bury Leah, and where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah and finally he also all were buried. So he had to just bury her there alone in a strange country. But with loving hands he built a monument over her resting place, a monument so fine and strong that it endured to be seen as a landmark of the region in long future years.

> "The same is the pillar of Rachel's grave
> unto this day."

There is a very peculiar passage in the twenty-second verse of this thirty-fifth chapter. It reports a deed of shame by Reuben with his father's wife Bilhah. Why does the author drag this in? Again, in chapter thirty-eight, a very compromising story is told against another of the brothers, Judah. That whole chapter seems to be rather dragged in as a sort of interlude in the story of Joseph.

It might be suggested that possibly the author was of the tribe of Ephraim, Joseph's son, and they always tried to maintain airs of superiority among the tribes. Perhaps he was rather pleased to be able to say something disparaging about all four of the oldest sons that might by age have contested this superiority—Simeon and Levi for their violence at Shechem, and here these compromising stories about Reuben the oldest and Judah also one of the oldest four and the most prominent in many respects.

Whether that be right or not—and perhaps it is rather fanciful—I think we will be right in counting that, as has been already said, he wished to paint these primitive fathers in true colors with all their faults of early life, to show by the contrast of the noble manhood into which they developed, the power of the redeeming grace of God.

V

36 Now these are the generations of Esau (the same is Edom). 2 Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, 3 and Basemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. 4 And Adah bare to Esau Eliphaz; and Basemath bare Reuel; 5 and Oholibamah bare Jeush, and Jalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, that were born unto him in the land of Canaan. 6 And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the souls of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his possessions, which he had gathered in the land of Canaan; and went into a land away from his brother Jacob. 7 For their substance was too great for them to dwell together; and the land of their sojournings could not bear them because of their cattle. 8 And Esau dwelt in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

9 And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir: 10 these are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau, etc.

. . . .

31 And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel, etc.

The next section, in chapter thirty-six, takes up the genealogy of Esau. Indeed it seems to be made to constitute two sections, each beginning with the accustomed words, "These are the generations." This making two sections may be to give a little additional honor to Esau who, as Isaac's son and Jacob's full brother may seem to be hardly getting as fair a deal as he deserved. Or it may be just to increase the number of sections in his book, counting the prologue, to twelve, the favorite Hebrew number. Probably it is enough merely to suppose that he found two separate genealogy manuscripts and copied them both intact.

One of the accounts is more brief and apparently early, and the other much longer, carrying down much later. This, as we have several times seen, is his way of courteously dismissing any part of the *dramatis personae* whom he is no longer going to use, so Esau is now out of the story. We will notice in verse thirty-one a reference to kings in Israel as a date mark that would be recognized. As there were no kings in Israel till the time of Saul, that passage is considered to indicate that this book was composed, at least in its present form, after that late date.

In the closing verses of the previous chapter Jacob himself is virtually shelved in the same way as a main actor, though he does appear more or less in the story of Joseph. A list of his children is given, and the account of his finally coming back and merging in the encampment of his old father Isaac.

Then, to close the section, the death of Isaac is recorded, in a good old age, and it is specially stated that his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. So at the last there was peace and reconciliation between the brothers, and each with good will, went on his own independent way.

That the author considered that God's grace had succeeded and Jacob was truly a redeemed man, is sufficiently indicated in all his story from the time of the vision of the Ladder at Bethel, and especially by his acts since he returned from Padan-aram. As to his sons, though dark deeds have been told of them, and much darker deeds are to be told before the story closes, yet in the end we will find them all figuring as worthy, true men.

Not that they exhibited any special, conspicuous holiness and virtue. Most of the rank and file of Christian men today do not, so the story would not be true to nature if all these did. But the author wishes them to be considered and judged in contrast with all in the first part of the book not under the personal conducting of God whose stories all ended dismally, as well as with the dismal end of Lot's story. It is enough that these sons of Jacob, though beginning very imperfect and some positively bad, yet under the influence of this régime of God's care grew gradually better and in the end came out, as we shall see, fairly worthy and successful men.

CHAPTER XVII

Gold Tried in the Fire

I

THE author has established his thesis, and proved what he started out to prove with proofs both positive and negative. What is the key to happiness, the road to the highest life? He has first tried five of the expedients that the world has always trusted in, and still trusts today, and has found them all to fail. Then he has taken up the one plan that he expects to succeed, the life personally conducted by God, and testing it in three fairly representative lives, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, found that in spite of natural weaknesses and dangers, God conducted them safely through and they all ended noble and triumphant.

But an argument should have a ringing peroration, something striking to clinch it all. So he wants to crown all the story with one shining example, one splendid instance of what the personal conducting of God can effect, one man that walked without stumbling.

> "For Jehovah was with him,"

and whose life from beginning to end was glorious.

And so he wrote the most beautiful story of all literature, the matchless story of Joseph.

This story is too perfect to mutilate by piecemeal, so we will assume that the reader will prefer to have the whole story together as it is presented in the Bible text, to which he is here referred.

The suggestion has been made that Joseph is intended as a sort of type or Old Testament foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. The suggestion is not altogether unreasonable. Jesus was the presence of God actually appearing in human life, and Joseph is given as the picture of what God can make of a human life that is thoroughly led and conducted by him. He is often counted the one single character in the Old Testament who is without any faults, and it is not improbable that the author intended to have us consider him to be so.

There are one of two infelicities that, from the standpoint of our modern tastes and customs we might be disposed to criticize. We disapprove of tale-bearing (chap. 37:2), and smile at the naïve egotism with which he told his dreams (chap. 37:5-11). His act of establishing a very substantial tax on the lands of the Egyptians (chap. 47:26), might be rated differently according as it was judged from the ultra-democratic ideas of our times, or the standards of the governments as they functioned then. But probably none of these would suggest any censure to the people for whom the book was originally written.

But if faultless himself, he suffered much from the faults of others. First and not least was the very injudicious practice of his father in showing conspicuous favoritism to him among his envious brothers. Poor little boy! He did not know any better than to make the most of the pretty clothes that were put on him, and to go around showing them off. And he was entirely too innocent and unsophisticated to appreciate what impression would be made by his telling his very egotistical sounding dreams.

These things would perhaps tend to rouse in him some feeling of pride and superiority. Our modern psychoanalysts would say the fact that he had such dreams indicated that he was already inclined to feel that way. Very probably the author realized and intended some such thought in order to show how, by the grace of his constant walking with God, it did not after all have that effect on him.

II

The section opens with the usual formula:

"These are the generations of Jacob."

However, as we have already remarked, the story is not to be about Jacob but about Joseph. The scene is laid at first somewhere in the south near Hebron. There Jacob was rather permanently located in a style half way between that of the Bedouin and the settled agriculturist (chap. 37:7), which was apparently true also of his father Isaac (chap. 26:12). He stayed in the home encampment or settlement, while his sons and tribesmen took the flocks and herds and led them off to find pasture wherever it was to be found.

It was a rough, free life, sure to have many episodes far from strictly ethical, as we know always is the case in that kind of cow-boy life, and of which we have some small hints in the narrative here. Joseph, brought up in the sheltered atmosphere of the home, was shocked at some of the things he saw when occasionally he was allowed to go off on a trip with his older brothers, and naturally could not help telling about them when he came back home.

He was too innocent and kind hearted himself to have any suspicion that his brothers were harboring such bitter thoughts against him, or to think that his dreams were more than bright, interesting stories to tell. But in the hearts of his brothers the poison of envy and hate had sunk deep.

His father called him one day to go off on a long trip to see his brothers. To the lad of seventeen it seemed a great lark. He must have had a stout heart to dare alone all the dangers he might meet on such a trip. He did have troubles, for when he got to the place where he expected to find his brothers they were not there. A friendly stranger told him where they had gone, and he started on again, away over the mountains to Dothan. The whole journey was fully half the length of the country away from his home.

His brothers saw him away off coming down the hills. The sight awoke all their old hatred, and for the moment it blazed up hotter than ever. He had no thought but that they would all be as pleased as he was, as he ran laughing into their midst. But he was roughly seized, his pretty coat stripped off, and in the first spasm of anger they were making preparations to kill him.

Reuben, feeling the responsibility of the oldest son, counseled delay, and got them to just throw him into an old abandoned well there for safe keeping, planning later to get him some way back to his father again. Then the brothers, their wrath a little satisfied, all sat down to dinner, eating probably some of the very dainties that Joseph had patiently lugged all the way over the mountains for them.

Judah was the efficient man, the planner, and he soon had a crafty scheme to get rid of the boy without the rather unpleasant need of murder. Seeing a caravan of traveling merchants approaching he suggested that they make a bargain with them to buy Joseph as a slave and take him down to sell in the slave marts of Egypt. This was done, and then they made his coat all bloody and torn as though he had been pounced upon and killed by some wild beast, and in mock anxiety took it home and showed it to their father.

He believed, as they intended, that Joseph had been torn to pieces, and his heart was completely crushed. Why had he let that poor defenseless boy go off alone on that dangerous journey! He never could forgive himself or get over the horror of the boy's cruel death. Twenty years he walked under the cloud of grief, with bowed head and aching heart. Did he afterward appreciate what a base thing it was that he had done when he, a son, had deceived an old and trusting father?

It added to the effect to have a little interlude here, and this the author supplied with a little story in chapter thirty-eight about Judah's decidedly uncreditable doings, already referred to. This was intended as we have surmised, to show the low level from which God's grace and leading were able to take a man and raise him up to patriarchal nobility. It also acts as a sort of foil or background to set off the noble pure character of Joseph.

III

In the narrative that follows we have the often repeated statement:

"Jehovah was with him."

This is intended to be considered the key and explanation of the whole story. The first sign of this care of Jehovah for Joseph was seen in the kind of master into whose possession the chances of the slave market brought him. It might have been some up country farmer or merchant, or some cruel task master. But instead it was one of the very highest officers of the king, the captain of his body guard. This put him on the road where great things might happen. And Joseph's own character and ability, together with the favor of Jehovah, soon got him into a high position there, the highest that a slave could expect, head of all the household arrangements in this high official's home.

Then came temptation, and the spiteful revenge of the foiled temptress, and Joseph finds himself degraded and cast into prison. He showed his special nobility in that he made no attempt to defend himself, since if successful it would have meant a cruel death for the poor misguided woman.

He was cast into prison, but notice that it was the special aristocratic prison where prisoners from high life were kept, since he was from a high official household. Probably his old master, the captain of the guard, had some connection with that prison. He could not forgive what he thought was an unpardonable insult to his honor, but he may have passed on a good word to the jailer about Joseph's fine character in other respects. The friendly favor of Jehovah also was still with him. The keeper saw that he was a man that could be trusted, and it was a very convenient thing to have a man among the prisoners themselves that would relieve him of a great many details and personal encounters in the daily management of the prisoners.

The record says that it was Jehovah's favor that got him all these advances, but it also expects us to see very plainly that Jehovah's favor did this by making him such a good, noble, likable and trustworthy man that such trusted positions naturally came to him.

No hurrying, but he is in the road of opportunity, and after a while opportunity began to come in sight. Two of the king's high officers, his most intimate attendants, found themselves cast into prison, and it would be just this king's prison where Joseph was. As the king's butler and baker they would be persons constantly admitted to the king's presence and specially trusted by him to see that no poison or other hurtful thing came to his table.

Something had happened that caused suspicion. Perhaps someone had been poisoned. Not easy to tell which one was to blame, so both the butler and the baker were put into prison, and came into close association with Joseph.

Joseph knew by his own experience how to feel sympathy with persons that were unfortunate, and his own kind nature and affable temperament soon put him on cordial, friendly terms with the two great high officials. His real interest in them made him notice that they were more glum and distracted than usual one morning, and also encouraged them to confide in him the strange dreams of the night before that were perplexing them. Joseph felt that he was in special fellowship with Jehovah, and so he felt assurance to offer to interpret the meaning of the dreams to them.

The butler's dream was of finding luscious bunches of grapes—three bunches—pressing out the juice into Pharaoh's cup and giving it to him to drink, as of old he had been accustomed to do. Joseph told him it meant that in three days he would be restored again to his old office as Pharaoh's butler.

The baker was more hesitant to tell, but seeing the good meaning of the butler's dream he told his. He had baskets of confectionery, also three, upon his head, and the birds came and ate the dainties out of the baskets.

Joseph told him that it meant that in three days his head should be taken from off him.

A psychoanalyst would perhaps say it was the subconscious—or conscious—feeling of guilt and of innocence that had caused the two men to have the different dreams. The king later confirmed this, for he seems to have satisfactorily established which of the two men was the criminal, and on the third day, which was his birthday, he took the matter up and had the baker executed, and restored the butler back into favor again.

Joseph made a piteous plea to the butler to say a good word for him when he should find himself again in a place where he could. And no doubt the butler intended to do so. But for a while he felt possibly a little insecure in his own position. Perhaps best not to show too much interest in the criminals he had met in the prison. So he put it off, and as he got more at ease his duties took up all his time, till he forgot it altogether. And so Joseph was left to stay in the prison for two years longer. Suffering if it does not embitter often tends to sweeten a noble nature and make it more noble.

IV

Jehovah was still with Joseph, and at the end of two years opportunity again appeared upon the road. The king had dreamed a dream that so caught his imagination and was so strange that it troubled him. His magicians and wise men tried but could not give any interpretation that was satisfactory to the king.

Then the butler, naturally in the company of the king, suddenly remembered his ingratitude to his friend Joseph in the prison, and told the king all about his dream. Anything to get an interpreter, and this was such a romantic feature that it made it all the more interesting. So he sent right off to have Joseph brought in.

The author throws in here just a little touch of Egyptian etiquette. Smooth faces were the strict rule in the Egyptian court, though not common with the Hebrews, and he takes pains to tell us that in preparing to come before the king "he shaved himself."

Joseph modestly says to Pharaoh, "I have no special wisdom to be able to interpret your dream, but God wants you to understand the dream he has given you as it has an important purpose, so he will give you the interpretation." Then Pharaoh tells Joseph the dream and Joseph tells him the meaning of it.

Pharaoh had seen seven exceedingly fine, fat cattle—water buffaloes—that had been down cooling themselves in the river. They come up on the bank and begin to feed. Right after there were seven of the poorest, leanest cattle ever seen that also came up out of the river, and in some way they seemed to attack the seven fat cattle and eat them up.

Then when he went to sleep and dreamed again, there were seven exceedingly fine, large, plump ears of grain, and seven small, withered, blasted ears that grew up right beside them, and some way—dreams are entirely unreasonable—they seemed to get hold of the good ears and eat them all up.

Joseph told him that the sevens in both dreams meant seven years. The seven good cattle and seven good ears, meant seven years that the crops in the country would be extraordinarily heavy. The seven lean cattle and seven lean ears of grain meant seven years of famine that would follow right after, when nothing would grow.

The whole meaning of the dream then was that there would be seven years of special abundance when everything would grow in an extraordinary amount and the farmers would have far more than they would know what to do with, and right after there would be seven years of famine when they could raise nothing.

This interpretation seems to have been accepted by the king at once as true and satisfactory. Now why did he so accept it? To us who know how it all turned out it seems perfectly obvious. But they did not know. How did Pharaoh decide that it was true? The magicians had previously tried their hands at it and been rejected. Why had he rejected their interpretations and accepted that of Joseph? These court magicians of Egypt were the keenest people in the world at conjuring up likely explanations and auguries. There is no doubt but they had built up and presented to Pharaoh an explanation of the dreams that was in the highest degree plausible. How did the king come to decide so quickly and definitely for Joseph?

Well, opera stars, kings and other despots are proverbially inclined to be temperamental. Some little momentary pet or temper may have made him reject the magicians' story, and some equally slight tickling of his fancy may have put him into the humor to swing to the other extreme and accept the interpretation of Joseph with enthusiasm. Such persons are very likely to be very impulsive that way. Also we must remember that "Jehovah was with Joseph." At any rate, he did accept the interpretation and give full credit to Joseph.

Then events began to move very swiftly for Joseph. He was the son of a desert prince and felt no bashfulness to stand and speak before the king. So he took the liberty to add a little advice.

"God has given you this information in order that you may make use of it to save your land from distress. Since there will be seven years when much more than enough food will be grown, and then seven years when there will be no crops, it would be a wise plan to have some special officer appointed to see that all the extra supply of the seven good years is stored up, and to deal it out to the people during the seven years of famine."

"Very true," said the king, "and you are just the man for the place."

And so the troubles and sorrows of Joseph are all over, and he steps at once from the dungeon to the highest rank and office in the kingdom.

Here again it seems like a very sudden and impulsive act on the part of the king. But kings are often that way. Joseph's personality doubtless had made a good impression on him. If, as is probable, the story of Joseph had been told to him, the romantic features of the case would make a strong appeal to him. Son of a desert prince, seized and sold into slavery, prospered by his virtues then betrayed and thrown into prison, and there interpreting a significant dream for one of his own favorite officials. Such a romantic story might well thrill the jaded senses of the weary monarch. Most men naturally love to do striking and romantic things. To take a slave boy out of prison and elevate him up to be the highest officer in the kingdom—what could be more strikingly romantic and more delightful to any king?

But whatever the immediate causes and process we may well accept as the real ultimate explanation, that which is so frequently given in the text, that "Jehovah was with Joseph." It was God's directing Providence that was making everything come out just so as to secure the results desired.

It is also very interesting to note that, unless we count his interpreting the dreams miraculous, God carried on his entire guidance and personally conducting of Joseph, bringing him up to the very highest position that it was possible for him to hold in the world at that time, entirely by what we would call natural means. He did it all by just the natural Providence that any one of us may feel justified in believing we are receiving at the present time.

CHAPTER XVIII

Seats of the Mighty

I

THE confidence of the king was not misplaced. Joseph immediately took up the work and carried it on faithfully and efficiently. All through the seven years of plenty he kept his agents diligently at work all over the land, gathering in all the grain that anyone could possibly spare, and storing it up in great storehouses against the coming of the years of famine.

At length the seven good years came to an end and the seven years of famine began to come on. Now the scene changes and the next movement of our story is about ready to be introduced.

Joseph has been led through quite a number of different kinds of trials and tests, and because "Jehovah was with him" he has come through them all unspoiled. Even this last and very dangerous test of elevation to very high office and glory has not spoiled him. Now he is ready for the next move and the next test. His old family from Canaan is to come into the scene and he is again to meet his father and his brothers, and incidentally to meet by far the subtlest and deepest test of all. Will he stand it? How will he treat those brothers?

The famine was general through all the region, and the family of the old patriarch back in the Palestine country began to feel its pinch. A Bedouin, we are told, can live a long while just on the produce of his flocks and herds, but it soon becomes very irksome to him and he has a most intense longing for the grain and fruits that he is accustomed to get from his farmer neighbors.

They heard that there was grain to be bought down in Egypt. A caravan is made up and sent down there to procure some supplies. As foreigners they seem to have had to come before the head man, Joseph, for permission to buy. Joseph recognizes them at once but they have not the slightest idea who he is. It has been twenty years since he left them—left them a little boy of seventeen. They had been grown men when he left and would not change much, besides they would have told who they were when they made their application, but they would not dream that this great man apparently an Egyptian, living in princely style and virtually ruler over all the land, could possibly be anyone that they could know.

What does Joseph do? He does not make use of this chance to pay them back for the crime done to him, and wreak vengeance. We know instinctively that he would not do that, so the author does not even take the trouble to mention it.

He might, perhaps, have just made himself known and had a grand reunion right then and there, but—well, for one thing, that would not have made as good a story. It would not have afforded a chance to bring out so fully the depth of his feelings and also the change that had come over the character of his brothers.

Moreover he did not know whether there was any change in their characters or not, and he must find out before he could know what was the best thing for him to do. If a man is criminally minded it may not be the best thing to treat him with too much favor. Besides it would be a good and wholesome thing for them in any case to get by their own experience a little idea of the suffering and pain that they had wantonly inflicted on another.

So he makes the plausible pretext that they are spies come to find out the weakness of the land with a view to a raid or war—which possibly was a common thing in those days—and had them all shut up in prison. He left them all in the prison three days, just long enough to let them be able to feel what the terror of that state was, since they did not know but that they were to be permanently kept there. Then he comes to them with a mild and fair proposition.

He has a method in what he proposes. He had noted that his own full brother Benjamin was not with them. By his questioning he had managed to find out, to his great joy, that his father was still alive, and that Benjamin was at home with his father. But how were they treating Benjamin? With envy and hatred, as they had treated him? Was that perhaps the reason the father had not allowed him to come down with them? Besides he had a great yearning to see his younger brother.

So he told them that he would believe they were true men and not spies if they would make good their account of themselves by going home and bringing Benjamin down with them. To insure their coming back he would keep one of them still bound in the prison till they returned.

He heard them talking together and it almost broke him down and spoiled all his plan. Their prison experience had enabled them to realize how mean they had been to inflict such a cruel fate on their crying and pleading little brother. And Reuben could not forbear trying to get the little credit he could from the fact that he had done something to keep them from their purpose.

He chose Simeon to be left in the prison. Perhaps he would naturally have taken Reuben the oldest and most responsible, but since he had put in a good word for him that time he spared him now, and Simeon was the next oldest. So he sent the rest of them back home, incidentally having secretly put all their money back into their sacks of grain, partly no doubt just as a friendly pleasantry, and partly perhaps to see what they would do when they found it out.

II

I wonder if he did not soon begin to be just a little sorry that he had not revealed himself to them without all this plan. For it was a whole year and more before he saw anything of them again. With their brother Simeon left behind in prison surely they would return before that!

But the famine continued, they were in distress again, and the father directs them to go down again after more grain.

"But we can not go without Benjamin, for then the ruler will be sure we are spies and will kill us all."

"No, Benjamin cannot go with you. I simply cannot let him go. Why did you tell them anything about Benjamin?"

They explain and argue with him, but it is of no use. He cannot let Benjamin go.

But the distress grew more and more acute. They simply must have grain. At last he can hold out no longer, and as Judah solemnly promises to be surety for the safety of the boy he finally consents. They take back again the money that had been returned and new money for the purchases. They also take a present for the ruler, of the best things the country could furnish, and go down again to Egypt.

When they arrive the authorities seem satisfied and even pleased. Simeon is released to them, and to their great astonishment and not a little alarm, they are directed to go to the ruler's house for dinner.

Joseph comes home at noon, and tactfully manages to carry off the meeting in non-committal fashion, though when he gets the good news that his father is still alive and well, and especially when he sees his own only full brother Benjamin, his feelings for a moment get the better of him and he has to go off by himself to give way to his emotions.

It is rather rich when he asks them in a superior sort of way, as if just for politeness to make conversation:

> "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke?
> Is he yet alive?"

It was probably with considerable inward tremor he asked it, for their answer might easily have been very different.

The meal passed off pleasantly in proper form, of course Joseph and the Egyptians eating at a separate table from the Hebrew foreigners. They were just a little mystified to see how unerringly he seated them according to their ages. And it was not entirely for affection, but there was also an element of test in it when he showed to the youngest, Benjamin, very conspicuously more favor than he showed to the rest.

Again their sacks were loaded, the money put back in them, and they were sent back home. But now he has the final test, to try to the limit their character and especially their feelings toward the one who, like himself, was a father's favorite, the young Benjamin. His ceremonial cup is put in Benjamin's sack, and when they have gone a little way officers are sent to accuse them of stealing it and to bring them back.

They are all astonished and indignant. "Search and see. If any one has your cup let him be put to death and take us all for slaves."

"All right. That is fair. We will search and if any one has it he will have to suffer. Those that are innocent need have no fear."

They craftily began with the oldest to search the sacks, and the brothers' heads were held high with pride and confidence as sack after sack was opened and nothing found. There is just one more yet to open, the sack of Benjamin, but there carefully hidden away the precious cup is found.

III

Calamity dark, crushing and hopeless! The end has come! The nemesis of their crimes against their brother Joseph, which had overshadowed them when they first came down, now has fallen upon them. Worse than before, now their younger brother Benjamin also will perish, and when he does not come home their father too will die of grief.

Back they are all led to the city. Joseph is still there to receive them. He charges them with strange ingratitude. They fall down before him and make no attempt to find excuse, but deliver themselves up for bondmen. Now he tries the supreme test. Will they abandon Benjamin to get free themselves? He opens the road for that.

"No, that is not the way we do in Egypt. We always do justice here. The one who stole the cup I will punish by making him a slave. As for the rest of you it is your duty to go on home to your old father with the food to save his life."

What will they do? "If Benjamin is really a thief he ought to suffer for it. He has been a petted, spoiled child, and it must have weakened his character, for the proof of his theft is right here before our eyes. And it is true that our father needs this food and needs our services in the encampment. It will not help Benjamin any if we do stay. Hadn't we better take the ruler's word for it and get away as quickly as we can before we get into some other trouble?"

It would not really have been any great discredit to them if they had said this. To do so would have been lawful and reasonable. They might be credited with character infinitely higher than when we first met them and still do that. Anxiously Joseph awaits the answer. And when it comes it is all and more than he could have asked. It abundantly justified the risk he was taking to make it.

No, they would not go home without their brother. They would not leave him alone even if he was guilty. And not only so but Judah steps forward and makes an offer that showed a love for the father and a spirit of sacrifice almost as noble as that of Joseph himself.

Since the ruler has said that only one should be held as a slave he begs that he be allowed to be that one. He will stay as a slave in place of his brother, and let Benjamin and all the rest go back up home to the father.

At last Joseph has splendid proof that they are now worthy and true. This speech of Judah broke his heart completely. He commanded all the attendants to leave the room, and then alone with his brothers cried out:

"I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?"

There are scenes that are not for strangers. Perhaps we ought not to try to enter where the Egyptian courtiers were excluded. And for a time even the brothers were outside. They could not believe it was true. This was joy too great for human feelings to grasp. From the lowest depths of despair to the utmost heights of happiness—of course they could not for a while have power to realize it.

But it was true. Joseph knew it was true, and they would, too, in due time. It was Joseph's perfect hour. His highest hopes he now knew were to be fully realized. His brothers were true and nobler than he had ever dared to hope. His father was still alive and they would all soon once more be reunited and a new world begin for them all.

IV

"And the report thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house."

The attendants had all been sent out of the room so there was no one to report it, but I suppose that then just as now, doors had cracks and keyholes that could be peeked through. Anyway, such good news as that cannot be kept from getting out. It is said that "All the world loves a lover," and Pharaoh and the rest of them were only a little less pleased and elated than Joseph himself.

Kings can do things thoroughly when they undertake it. All the family must be brought right down here to Egypt and taken care of in the very best part of the land till all this famine was over. Wagons and bounteous supplies of all sorts of provisions were provided and the brothers were hurried off to go up and bring their father and all his company down to Egypt and plenty.

A very different journey this from their first return, with Simeon left behind and anxiety in all their hearts. They reach home with the wonderful report. Poor old Jacob, waiting in trembling anxiety for the safety of his son, could not believe the news at first. It was a trick or a trap for new calamities. But when he saw the actual physical proof, the wagons and the great stores of provisions that had been sent, at last the truth began to sink into his heart. The great load of sorrow under which he had walked for so many years was rolled clear away, and he cried out:

"It is enough. Joseph my son is yet alive
I will go and see him before I die."

And so they all start off on their journey down to Egypt. Also on the way they have renewed confirmation, for God appeared to him in a night vision and gave his sanction, and gave the promise of a return in great prosperity in the future.

Kings are fickle, so it would not be wise to bank too much on generous promises made in a moment of emotion. The excitement of the first discovery would have worn off and things have settled back to normal routine again in Egypt. Anyway, all things should be done in proper form according to punctilious court etiquette. So Judah goes on ahead to announce their coming.

Joseph went out to meet them, and there was a very affecting time when father and son were again united after so long and so painful a separation. Joseph coached them all as to the proper formalities and the proper requests to make. Then he went back and through the proper court channels put in his formal request for a residence for the family.

Joseph's character and worth had taken too strong a hold on the real affections of the king for all this red tape to be really necessary. The king received the old patriarch with almost the reverence and affection he might give to his own father. Full provision was definitely made and they were all safely settled in the land of Goshen, the most suitable part of the country for them. Provision was made to supply them with food for all the years that the famine still continued.

V

This story is now practically ended, and again all that remains is to get the actors off the stage gracefully and with dignity.

A paragraph is devoted to ending up the famine situation. Joseph had provided plenty of food, but before the famine was ended the people had used up all their money, all their cattle and at last had had to pledge even their lands and their bodies for the last year's food and seed for the next year's sowing. This Joseph commuted into a regular fixed annual tax, which would do much to strengthen the government. The tax seems rather high to us, but probably it was not excessively high as taxes went in those days.

> 13 And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. 14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15 And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for *our* money faileth. 16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. 17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph; and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their cattle for that year. 18 And when that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide from my lord, how that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's; there is nought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: 19 wherefore should we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land be not desolate.

20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine was sore upon them: and the land became Pharaoh's. 21 And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof. 22 Only the land of the priests bought he not: for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore they sold not their land. 23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. 24 And it shall come to pass at the ingatherings, that ye shall give a fifth unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. 25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. 26 And Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests alone became not Pharaoh's.

27 And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they gat them possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly. 28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years. 29 And the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me: bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt; 30 but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. 31 And he said, Swear unto me: and he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

48 And it came to pass after these things, that one said to Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. 3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4 and he said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. 5 And now thy two sons, who were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. 6 And thy issue, that thou begettest after them, shall be thine; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7 And as for me, when

I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some distance to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem).

8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? 9 And Joseph said unto his father, they are my sons, whom God hath given me here. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath let me see thy seed also. 12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 the angel who hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. 17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father; for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head. 19 And his father refused, and said, I know *it,* my son, I know *it;* he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. 20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee will Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. 21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God will be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. 22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

49 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the latter days.

. . . .

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them and blessed them: every one according to his

blessing he blessed them. 29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. 31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah—32 the field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth. 33 And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. 1 And 50 Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. 2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of embalming: and the Egyptians wept for him threescore and ten days.

4 And when the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found favor in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, 5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. 6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. 7 And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. 9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. 10 And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and there they lamented with a very great and sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. 11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. 12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13 for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field, for a possession of a burying-place, of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. 14 And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead,

they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him. 16 And they sent a message unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. 18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we are thy servants. 19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. 21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were born upon Joseph's knees. 24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. 26 So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

The old father, as he feels the end approaching, begins to make excuses to get his favorite son to come to see him. Even the best of sons in their busy lives often forget how much the old father longs to see them and to have them around him occasionally. Joseph brings his two sons and the father puts them in the same rank as his own immediate sons. In doing this he made what to Joseph seemed a strange gesture, putting his right hand with the greater blessing on the head of the younger, Ephraim, a prediction that was confirmed in the actual history—and perhaps also the author, if himself of that tribe, has a personal pride in referring to it.

Just before his death the old patriarch gathers all his sons around his bedside and there gives them one by one his dying blessing. This done, he peacefully lies down for his last long sleep.

Now comes a very significant part of the story which is usually passed over as of secondary importance or interest. This story of the burial of Jacob comes as a matter of course in the conclusion of this part of the narrative. We probably think little about it. It seems merely a minor incident, a mere routine ending of the story.

But I am inclined to think that in the author's plan it was not a minor incident. He intended it for one of the most important parts. Like the story of Abraham's offering up Isaac, it is one of the great climaxes of the book and full of meaning. It has the same mission as that story, as stamping the God-conducted life of Jacob a complete success.

Israel's sons had promised that they would take him up and bury him beside his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. So his body is embalmed according to the wonderful art of the Egyptians, and Joseph makes formal request to the king to be allowed to go up to the land of Canaan for the burial.

We might perhaps be disposed to think that Joseph was getting a little out of favor, that he had to get someone to intercede for him with Pharaoh. Just the opposite is true. According to oriental etiquette it always shows more greatness and is more distinguished to have some go-between act as your agent. In this case he has the highest go-between, the members of the royal family.

The favor in which he was held is shown by the response he received. The king not only sanctioned his going but, presumably at his direction as well as through the esteem in which Joseph was held by all, almost the whole court accompanied Joseph on his funeral journey.

"All the servants of Pharaoh
The elders of his house
And all the elders of the land of Egypt."

It was a very great and magnificent company. There could hardly have been more honor shown if it had been a member of the royal house. It is the intention of the author to have it considered so. It made a great impression all through the long journey up to Canaan. When they got there they made a long stop within the land of Canaan for a special great mourning ceremony, as if intentionally to impress the people of Jacob's own former home with the greatness to which he had been raised.

The intention of the author is to say that Jacob, because he was under the personal tutelage of God, ended his career in the greatest glory and splendor. We involuntarily contrast this with Lot, who refused to stay under that leading and his story ended in disaster and disgrace. Even Noah, counted the one man in all the world good enough to be saved from the flood, yet not under the personal covenant of trust and guidance, goes out of the story lying drunk and disgraced in his tent. Jacob, though beginning his life as a rascal and a cheat, by God's guiding and grace was redeemed, was ennobled, and at the end of a worthy career was given a funeral of truly royal magnificence.

If the author makes the burial of Jacob seem almost like an apotheosis, he has equal meaning in his last scene which takes Joseph off the stage. It would seem as though he had already said everything that could be said to give him credit and glory, and yet this last delicate touch is perhaps the best of all.

He had suffered, been betrayed, maligned, imprisoned, and had forgiven it all. When raised to power he had been magnanimous and generous, had received back to favor and love all those that had cruelly treated him. We could well allow him a little consciousness of what he had done and a little desire that his brothers should show some proper penitence and gratitude. But his love was too great and his heart too simple and kind for even that. When his brothers came, after the father's death, to plead for forgiveness for what they had done, it only made him weep to know that they thought they needed to ask.

The author has drawn his pictures well. He has fully made out his case. If the fellowship and guidance of God could produce a life and character like that it is the secret for which we are seeking—it is fully vindicated as the road to the highest life.

CHAPTER XIX

Conclusion

THIS ends the story. The author clearly intends it to be an end, a conclusion. Every thread is wound up, every theme is pursued to its termination. The argument is closed.

We claimed in the beginning of our studies that this book of Genesis is an independent book with a definite message. That message has now been given. The author has presented his argument fully and brought it to a close. Whether or not he has proved his point he has said all he intends to say, he has rounded up the discussion and now leaves the question to us.

His plan has been by a system of illustrative stories to seek a solution of the great question of the ages, the question of the Highest life, the road to success and satisfaction.

Five separate plans he has proposed, the ones that the world has always rated as most promising, and he has found them all to lead to disappointment. First he tried Perfect Environment in Eden, and found it led only to rebellion and disaster. Second, he showed what Great Efficiency could do in the line of Cain, and it yielded physical success, but its ethical fruits were only hollow, vauntings and threats of violence. Third came Ecclesiasticism, or organized religion. This could produce some Enochs that "walked with God," but the Sons of God would marry with the world's glory, wealth and power, and the whole earth sank down in corruption.

Fourth—Punishment is the means to which men's minds always turn as the infallible remedy, the most trusted resource of both church and state. God satisfied this demand of human thought by trying that expedient once, and in its most drastic possible form. But when it was over he said in emphatic terms, "This is not the way."

Fifth—Nationalism, a strong government, consolidated power. The whole course of human history has been drenched in blood offered at that altar, and we are still as devout worshipers as ever. But again God said No, broke up the solidarity of men at Babel and declared such centralized, unlimited power a source of danger.

II

Having demonstrated thus what was not the way, he assumes to show what is the true way, the way which will bring final and satisfactory success, the true road to the highest life. That road is the "Personally Conducted" way, the life of trust and fellowship with God.

To establish this he brings forth a number of representative men to illustrate some of the main kinds of human experience, these examples to some extent paralleling the circumstances that before had led to failure, but here issuing in complete success.

Abraham was the exponent of Organized Religion. In his case, for all his native goodness, more than once his faith failed, and he might easily have been headed for disaster. But because he had entrusted himself to the personal conducting of God, and because God did his part, he did not fail but ended his course with special honor and is still an inspiring example to the world.

This is made more conspicuous by the contrast of his nephew Lot. He was naturally an almost equally generous worthy man. But he definitely chose to go out from the personally conducted enterprise, and his story ends in both physical and moral disaster.

Isaac, like Adam, was a man by fostering care surrounded with the most favorable environment. But, under God's conducting, unlike Adam he did not end in disaster but had a successful life.

Jacob was an efficient, aggressive "go-getter" like Cain, and started out his career almost as disastrously. His case is, perhaps, the most significant of all, because it gives the gage of what God's grace and conducting can do for a bad man. It is the Old Testament version of the Prodigal Son. His early life is intended to present the type of all that is crooked and unpromising. He was deceitful, covetous, unscrupulous. Where he should have been corrected he was enticed to evil by his own mother.

But God, who respected the promises he had made, was quite equal to the case. He brought Jacob to the depths of despair and repentance. Then in his extremity he laid a father's kind, gentle hand upon him and turned him clear round. He led him through a long life of many vicissitudes, where the crooks of his natural temper and the sins of his past life brought him plenty of trial and suffering. But ever God kept him steadily traveling upward.

Long before the end he already stands before us as the noble Patriarch Israel, the Man of God. At the close he comes out into the calm waters of secure prosperity and peace. And when he dies the sovereign of the greatest nation in the world accords him a funeral fully regal in its magnificence and pomp.

To end and crown all the author gives us the story of Joseph. The most beautiful story and the most lovely and noble character in all literature, a shining example from first to last, because from first to last "Jehovah was with him."

The author means to say that, while all other plans failed this plan of the life personally conducted by God was certainly and triumphantly successful.

III

While the discussion of this great problem thus furnishes the formal subject of the book, through it all we must not fail to see presented, what is ever the main problem of religion, the question of the relation between God and men—the attitude of God toward men.

By his picture of God as Creator, he first unequivocally declares the infinite greatness and majesty of God, but with that as a basis his effort all through is to present God as offering and welcoming the most familiar and cordial fellowship between men and himself.

The charge is often made as a criticism of the book that it pictures an anthropomorphic God, a familiar God doing small things, associating with small men, treating them as friends and companions, meeting them on their own level. That it represented him as like a "tutelar divinity" a national god, such a god that men looked on him as their own special patron, specially favorable to them and exerting himself on their individual account.

The answer to all this criticism is to say enthusiastically Yes that is just what it does picture. And that is just what the New Testament also pictures. That is just what we are told the Son of God himself considered so important that he came to earth and assumed human form for it—just in order to make men feel that God could have that real friendly and companionable relation with them.

It is just that feature in all this book that gives it its special value, gives it absolutely the same kind of value that makes the New Testament Gospel so very precious.

The New Testament is called a Gospel because it reveals to us a God whom we can love. Jesus revealed to us, both by his words and by his person, the sympathetic heart of God. Because this book of Genesis pictures to us that same kind of God offering to us sympathy and fellowship may we not rightly call it too a Gospel?

It shows God really caring for men and inviting their fellowship. It shows him acting as pledged and loyal friend to the men who were willing to walk thus in trust with him. It shows the life "Personally Conducted" by God as a life possible to men and as the only kind of life that could attain to real satisfaction and success.

IV

I wish to add a word about the assumption we have made that the author of the book of Genesis was not a common annalist or scribe but a religious genius or prophet. Much depends on the question whether the meaning we have found was intentional or accidental; whether the message that the best life is only to be attained by being personally conducted by God was intended by the author, or is it merely an accidental meaning which it happens to be possible to make out, as one can make out a face in the clouds or the form of a cathedral in the rocks. If it was something which the author intentionally designed to be there and selected these stories to embody it I think we are quite warranted in considering him a great religious philosopher and prophet.

It might be possible to consider it an accident if it was only one story which by manipulation could be made to present that meaning. But here it is the plain implication of every one of the stories and of the book as a whole. The stories are logically arranged with reference to this very thought, presenting it from the negative side in the earlier ones and from the positive side in the latter ones.

Recognizing this as his designed message enables us to see why, from the large mass of legend and tradition which was doubtless available to him the author made just this particular and rather strange selection. In addition it enables us to see that he had a reasonable intention in some parts of his narratives that otherwise seem hard to justify, as for instance the later history of Cain's family, the Rivers flowing out of Eden, the Sons of God and Daughters of men, the Tower of Babel, and others. And it explains another feature not usually recognized but significant—Why does he make up such a large part of the patriarchal history of acts distinctly discreditable to persons held in the highest honor by the people of his nation? This purpose furnishes a reasonable explanation.

The question then next arises—If that was the intended meaning of the book why has it not hitherto been more clearly recognized and specifically defined? But that question need not disturb us. Such lack of understanding often occurs. For instance the Jews so completely failed to see the meaning of their prophets which we can now see that they put their own messiah to death. There are many things in the life and teaching of Jesus which only after two thousand years we are now first beginning to see. Doubtless there are many other things there which we are still misinterpreting.

On the other hand that meaning and message has not been sterile through the past centuries. Though Christians did not apprehend and set it down in formal words yet all through the centuries the essentials of that message have been impressing themselves on their hearts in the reading of those stories. Without formulating the doctrine they have been actually attracted by them into a closer walk of trust, Personally Conducted by God. That was the important purpose rather than the mere teaching of a doctrine. In the same spirit Jesus purposely covered up his messages in parables, in order that the people might have their hearts impressed instead of merely their thoughts turned to the discussion of doctrines.

That is the real message of this book of Genesis. It is the same message as that of the New Testament. Indeed not inappropriately the book might be called "The Gospel according to Genesis."

THE END

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